The Lord's Supper

VOICES OF THE NIGHT.

BY

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The Night is far spent—the Day is at hand."—Rom. xiii. 12.

"All forms of sorrow and delight,
All solemn voices of the night
That can s..oth thee."

Tenth Thousand, Enlarged.

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PREFACE.

This Volume is meant to be a sort of whispering-gallery, in which may be heard the manifold and mingled Voices of "the night now far spent." Amid that darkness which thickens as the dawn draws near, and in the wilderness whose intricacies grow more perplexing as the land of promise is approached, the traveller watching for sunrise, and sometimes at a loss which way to turn, may be directed and perhaps encouraged by these echoes of celestial voices borne earthward, sounding at times a promise, at times an encouragement, and

always a direction—"This is the way, walk ye in it."

The writer believes that every Voice he has sought to make audible has its origin in the Word of God. Its key-note is there. The harmonies he has arranged are combinations, not creations of his own. It is this that encourages him to hope that, beyond the reach of his own voice, these will be heard; and that, by the pillows of the dying, in the chambers of the sick, and amid the vigils of the dead, the truths that subdue, sustain, and sanctify—that, like delicate aromatic perfumes, penetrate where coarser consolations are inaccessible—may find hospitality, and, "received as angels unawares," leave deep and abiding impressions behind them.

Most of these "Voices," in somewhat different forms, were uttered from the pulpit. One, from the eighth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, was preached in St. George's

Church, Glasgow, before the Society of the Sons of the Clergy; and to those who expressed their desire to see it in a permanent form, it is hoped it may prove acceptable in its present.

To some these Voices have sounded very musical. To those whose heart-strings have been re-tuned, they will still prove soft chimes borne from above, suggestive, and even sanctifying.

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CHAPTER I.

WHAT OF THE NIGHT?

"Watching on the hills of faith,
Listening what the Spirit saith
Of the dim-seen light afar,
Growing like a nearing star—

"'God's interpreter art thou
To the waiting ones below;
'Twixt them and its light midway,
Heralding the better day!

"'Catching gleams of temple spires—
Hearing notes of angel choirs—
Where, as yet unseen of them,
Comes the new Jerusalem.'"

"The burden of Dumah. He calleth to me out of Seir, Watchman, what of the night? Watchman, what of the night? The watchman said, The morning cometh, and also the night: if ye will enquire, enquire ye: return, come."—ISAIAH xxi. 11, 12.

THE words prefixed to this chapter may have a primary meaning applicable to local circumstances and to temporary events; but it seems to me that the words have an ulterior meaning, and remain yet to be fulfilled, if indeed they are not now actually fulfilling.

The expression "burden" is frequently used by the Prophets. It denotes that some great message has been entrusted to them, which lies, from its sorrowful contents, like a load or burden on their souls; that they are charged with a solemn but a sad embassy; commanded, in short, to bear tidings which must be told, though the heart should break while the lips give utterance to them; and that there is a weight upon their spirits, and their spirits can only be unloaded by letting that weight fall where the wisdom and the will of God had fixed that it should fall. The minister of the gospel is not like the prophet of old. His is a joyful work: he is appointed to proclaim good tidings—"glad tidings of great joy." He is, indeed, the ambassador of God, but his embassy is an embassy of gladness; and while the prophet's spirit must have often sunk beneath the weight of the calamities he was commissioned to predict, the spirit of the minister of the gospel should feel his message to be wings to soar with, rather than a weight by which to be depressed; for he proclaims clearly a Saviour —Christ the Lord—glad tidings to all people! And yet the minister of the gospel has some

messages not so joyful. When he sees the sword gleaming in the distant horizon, and ready to fall upon a guilty people, it is his duty, as a watchman, to say so; when he sees sin indulged in that must end in the ruin of a people, it is his duty to lift up his voice like a trumpet, and announce distinctly and intelligibly what it leads to. While the minister's chief message is joy, there are thus parts of it that must be sadness; and no portion of it is more sad or more solemn to be thought of than this—that the gospel preached during each year has been to some in his congregation, as he must fear, a savour of death, though he may rejoice also, that it has been to others a savour of life. We have lately passed through years darkened by overwhelming clouds; through scenes and circumstances that have shaken the firmest nerves, and made to quail the strongest hearts. They who profess to have a wider range of vision, see yet heavier calamities louring in the distant horizon. Whether it shall be so or not, we know not. This, however, we do know: be Christians, and all things will turn up their sunny sides to you, and the very sounds that convulse the universe shall come

to you in music, because they are the intimations that your redemption draweth nigh, and that the home and the kingdom of your Father is approaching nearer, day by day.

"Dumah" is only another form of expression for "Idumea," the Country of Edom. It is one of the names given to Edom by the prophet. It lay south of Palestine, and was peopled by the descendants of Esau, Jacob's brother: its capital city was Petra. I need not tell you what God has here said of Petra, or Seir, and how strictly it has been fulfilled; most of the works that treat of the fulfilment of ancient prophecy refer to Idumea, or Dumah, or Edom, with Petra, its capital, as at present—a most striking evidence of the minute fulfilment of God's predictions. "Edom," said God, "shall be a wilderness; a line of confusion and stones of emptiness shall it be. I will lay thy cities waste, and thou shalt be desolate, and Mount Seir (*i.e.* the hill on which Petra was built) I will make a perpetual desolation." Every traveller who has visited that country, and inspected the site and rocky caves of Petra, testifies that every prediction of God respecting it has been literally and minutely fulfilled. The origin of the quarrel

between Edom or Idumea and the children of Israel—a quarrel that is alluded to frequently by Isaiah and by all the prophets—was early in origin and lasting in effect. The strife between Jacob and Esau was perpetuated in their descendants; for the children of Edom, who sprang from Esau, carried on a constant hostility, whenever the opportunity occurred, with the children of Jacob or the tribes of Israel. This quarrel was renewed in one of its bitterest forms, when the Israelites were passing through the wilderness in order to reach the promised land: they had, as a map will easily show, to pass through the land of Edom, before they could reach Palestine. When Moses came to Dumah or Idumea, as it is recorded in Numbers xx. 14, "He sent messengers unto the king of Edom, Thus saith thy brother Israel"—affectionate and Christian language addressed by Moses, as the head of the tribes of Israel, to the children of Esau, and a precedent for us to use kind language at least—never a very great sacrifice, even to the bitterest foe with whom we have to contend—"Thus saith thy brother Israel, Thou knowest all the travel that hath befallen

us." Moses appeals to his pity: "How our fathers went down into Egypt, and we have dwelt in Egypt a long time; . . . And when we cried unto the Lord, he heard our voice, and sent an angel, and hath brought us forth out of Egypt: and, behold, we are in Kadesh, a city in the uppermost part of thy border. Let us pass, I pray thee, through thy country: we will not pass through the fields, or through the vineyards, neither will we drink of the water of thy wells; we will go by the king's highway, we will not turn to the right hand nor to the left, until we have passed thy borders." What a beautiful Christian spirit actuates Moses in speaking thus to a known, relentless, and bitter foe! You would suppose that Edom would thus have replied to the peaceful message of Moses: "You are a people that have come forth from the depths of oppression and bondage in Egypt,—you are weary and way-worn with a long and perilous journey; you ask what is reasonable; and if you will maintain the discipline you promise among the half million of followers by whom you are surrounded, you will be quite welcome to pass along our highway towards your own land."

"But Edom said unto him, Thou shalt not pass by me, lest I come out against thee with the sword. And the children of Israel said unto him, We will go by the highway; and if I and my cattle drink of thy water, then will I pay for it: I will only without doing any thing else, go through on my feet. And he said, Thou shalt not go through." What obstinacy, antipathy, and bitter hatred lurked in the King of Edom's heart! "And Edom came out against him with much people, and with a strong hand. Thus Edom refused to give Israel passage through his border: wherefore Israel" did not instantly fall upon him, and make war upon him, which would be the taste of the day, the vote of the multitude, but "turned away from him," and went another way. We find the quarrel begun between Jacob and Esau thus perpetuated; and such was the hostility that still rankled in the descendants of Esau, that they would neither give the passage as a favour, nor accept a price for it.

Now, some think that the various references in the Prophets to the judgments which were to come upon Edom, refer entirely to the time

when Israel was carried away captive into Babylon, on which occurrence the children of Edom, instead of being sorry, as they might have been expected to be, laughed, rejoiced, and triumphed that at last they had gained a victory, without struggle, through the judgment of God, which had thus fallen on their enemies. That some allusion is made to this epoch, I think is plain, from what is stated in Psalm cxxxvii.: "By the rivers of Babylon, there (say the Jews) we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion," &c.; and then, at ver. 7, "Remember, O Lord, the children of Edom in the day of Jerusalem; who said, Rase it, rase it, even to the foundation thereof"—as if, when Jerusalem was destroyed by the Chaldeans, and the Jews were led away captive, the children of Edom, instead of expressing sympathy with a discrowned king, and a scattered population, gave utterance to the laugh and shout of merriment and exultation, because the people whom they hated, and whose passage to their own land they had obstructed with such inveterate antipathy, had now been laid desolate, and carried into captivity to the banks of the Euphrates. The passage

of Scripture at the head of this chapter, may refer to this period; but it appears, from reading all that is said of Edom, that Edom is used throughout the ancient Prophets, in a great number of passages, as a type of the unbelieving nations among the Gentiles—just as Babylon is plainly used to describe the great apostasy which was to grow up in the later ages of the world, and finally to be consumed by "the spirit of the Lord's mouth, and by the brightness of His coming." Babylon, which was the name of the literal city, which was literally destroyed, and which was then the stronghold of apostasy from the true God, is applied in the Book of Revelation universally to the Church of Rome—it being the modern Babylon, the mystery of iniquity, whose doom is fixed by that tribunal whose decision never can be reversed; and so Edom has been understood by the most impartial readers of ancient prophecy to have a range of judgments associated with it, and to be associated itself with an epoch in the history of the world which can be no other than the last days of the last epoch, in which a night of overwhelming darkness is to fall, though out of

which a morn of beauty and imperishable brightness is destined also to evolve. We read, for instance, in Isaiah xxxiv., a striking description of judgments that must have reference to something ulterior. In verses 4 and 5 of that chapter, we read: "All the host of heaven shall be dissolved, and the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll: and all their hosts shall fall down, as the leaf falleth from the vine, and as a falling fig from the fig-tree. For my sword shall be bathed in heaven: behold, it shall come down upon Idumea." You may read at your leisure Isaiah xxxiv., and you will see that, under the name of Edom or Idumea, judgments are predicted so sweeping, so desolating, and so terrible, that they must refer to an era subsequent to the age of Edom as a regular kingdom, and to a people of whom Idumea was only a type. That this interpretation is correct will be seen by our consideration of some of the passages; —Isaiah xxxiv., for instance, describes a series of judgments so overwhelming, that they must go beyond Idumea; so chap. xxxv. describes a scene of beauty and of blessedness so unclouded and so unbroken, that it must refer to some-

thing beyond this dispensation. It is immediately after the judgments upon Edom pronounced in Isaiah xxxiv. have ceased, that the blessings, which clearly are millennial blessings, contained in chap. xxxv., begin. For instance, this has never yet been realised: "And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called the way of holiness: the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein. No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon, it shall not be found there; but the redeemed shall walk there: and the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away." These words, which delineate what is to succeed the desolation of Edom, surely describe a scene of peace, and a catalogue of blessings which have never been actualised in the experience of Mankind. And if chap. xxxv., in which this scene occurs, describes a scene of millennial glory, as I might easily prove, if necessary, this chapter xxxiv., which describes havoc and ruin upon Idumea,

must be a detail of judgments on the nations immediately preceding the millennium. And therefore the text, and the question and answer contained therein, whilst primarily relating to Idumea, refer to it, nevertheless, as the pedestal for the exhibition of scenes, and circumstances, and persons, long subsequent to the period of the existence of Idumea as a nation,—even the scenes, and circumstances, and ages in which our lot is now cast.

Now, at this time, which I believe to be the very era in which we now stand, and which I think to be so from great prophetic epochs rolling rapidly to their conclusion, a solitary watchman—some Christian minister, whose heart sympathises with the Jew, not with the inhabitants of Edom rejoicing over their ruin—some Christian minister, who believes God's word, that his ancient people are not cast off for ever, and that there is a bright day yet for those who have been the children of so long and so black a night —is seen by the prophet standing tiptoe upon the loftiest rock, boulder, or ruin of ancient Jerusalem, and straining his eyes, as he gazes into the East, if, peradventure, there

shall fall upon that eye some solitary straggling beam that will prove to him that the great Sun of Righteousness is but a very few degrees below the horizon, and is soon to emerge; that the night of Jerusalem is drawing to its close, and the light of the millennial day beginning to dawn with the rising sun. The vision of the prophet is, that of a watchman—a Christian minister, standing amid the ruins of that once great capital, looking up and gazing if he can catch the least token that the sun is about to rise, the night of sorrow about to retire, and the day-light of joy and peace to take its place. Whilst this watchman is thus waiting, looking, listening, marking all the signs and symbols that denote the approaching day, and hoping, and misgiving, and hoping again, but still clinging to God's promises, convinced that what he has predicted is sure to be performed, a proud scorner, seated on Mount Seir, the mount on which Petra, the capital of Idumea, was built—some proud, insolent, haughty sceptic, whose Messiah is money—whose millennium is the predominence of the moneyed interest —calls from Mount Seir, in scorn and derision,

and says: "I have heard that you watchmen, you prophets, you ministers, you millenarians, if there be any of the name, believe that these Jews are to be restored. Why, watchman, Providence is very long about it. You have been standing amid those ruins and those dismantled towers for some eighteen centuries, straining your eyes, neglecting the making of money and the duty of providing for your children, and getting a comfortable place and a rich living, and have been looking and longing for the return of that miserable outcast nation, the Jews: well, watchman, you have waited so long, What of the night? What evidence have you that this morn will ever break? "For my part," says this proud scorner—this rich inhabitant of this rich capital, "I don't believe one word of your prophecies. They are antiquated notions—old remains of the old prophets of a dispensation that has passed away. There are no more signs that the Jews will be restored in 1851, than there were when Jerusalem was broken down by the ploughshare of Titus, and the Jew sent a wanderer and a by-word over all the earth." This scorner from Mount Seir—this atheistic man, whose sole worship is

money-making, and whose God is mammon—will also say: "Palestine is still just as it was, a people without a nation, and a nation in Palestine without a people; the rocks and the arid sand are its only soil; dust is its only rain; the plagues of the people are still many; the bird of prey still flaps his broad wings upon its air; the jackal is the only inhabitant of its dreary caves, and graves, and dens;" and the "whole land," even a sceptic will be obliged to say, because he must acknowledge facts—facts which are simply the echoes of God's ancient prophecy—"the whole land is brimstone, and salt, and burning: there is nothing that it bears, nor is there any grass in it." And even Chateaubriand, who went to visit Palestine, in the course of his travels, when he walked over it and saw its terrible desolation, made the following striking commentary on ancient prophecy: "We perceived Jerusalem through an opening in the mount. I did not at first know what it was. I believed it to be only a mass of shattered rocks. The sudden apparition of this city of desolation in the midst of such wasted solitudes, had something about it altogether fearful. She was then, indeed, in the valley of the desert."

So the scoffer from Mount Seir, or, if you like to change the locality, the scoffer from our own metropolis, or from that across the Channel, asks, "Watchman, what of the night? Are those ruins beginning to rise into that glorious structure of Ezekiel that you have talked about? Does the grass begin to grow green beneath the hoof of the Arab's horse? or beneath the naked foot of the tonsured monk? Is there any evidence that the sun is about to rise above the horizon? Your prospect is poor, watchman—leave the rocks; show more common sense; go and make money, try to be rich and renowned; cease to anticipate any such impossibility." Let me remind such of what one has said whose testimony a Christian at least will not dispute: "Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying (just the very thing that was said here), Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." This, these scoffers "willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water

and in the water; whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished; but the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men;" or, as the word should be literally rendered, "The earth that now is is stored with fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. But," adds St. Peter, turning from these scoffers, "beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness"—as the watchman from Mount Seir declares—"but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night;" just when men see no sign of His advent unexpectedly; "in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat; the earth also, and the works that are therein, shall be burned up." We have thus considered the question put to the watchman by

the scoffer, predicted by Isaiah, who is only a type of the scoffers predicted by St. Peter to arise in the last days.

Then the watchman replies to this insolent, derisive question—for do not forget that such is the light in which you are to look at it—with great calmness, and with a quiet confidence that indicates his thorough conviction of the truth: "The morning cometh:" you may say what you like, you may talk of prospects as you like; you may lay down probabilities as you like; but "the morning cometh;" it is a fixed thing. God's word is stronger than man's facts; you may stand upon a promise of the Almighty firmer than on the strongest building of man, or on the everlasting hills. "The morning," says the watchman, "cometh, and also the night. If ye will enquire, enquire ye."

"The morning cometh." Now let me look at this first. As the question of the scoffer is derisively asked with reference to the restoration of the Jews, (for such is the allusion,) so the answer of the watchman is decidedly given, in reference to the same thing—"The morning cometh." "Your scoffs," says the faithful watchman, "do not damp my hopes;

your derision does not move me one inch from the strong ground of the sure and faithful promise on which I stand. God has said it, and my utterance is but the echo of the mind of God. The Jews will be restored; improbable as it may appear, it is notwithstanding absolutely certain." In order to confirm our faith in the statement of the prophet, I may here refer the reader to the 60th and 61st chapters of Isaiah, which clearly describe the restoration of the Jews. These chapters directly relate to the Jews. We Gentiles act very hardly by these Jews. Every beautiful promise that we read in the Old Testament, we seize, and say, "That is for us Gentiles;" and of every threat of desolation, judgment, and destruction, we say, "That is for you Jews." We take the kernel for ourselves, and give the shell to the poor Jews. We subtract from the prophecies everything that is bright and beautiful, and say, That is ours; and then all that is dark and threatening we fling in scorn to the Jew; and not only fling curses at him, but trample him under foot, and treat him as if he were the very offscouring of the earth, instead of being one

of a people embosomed in glorious promises, with title-deeds, beside which those of the greatest men in the world are but of yesterday, and with an inheritance in reversion the most glorious that language can describe or heart conceive—an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away. Now I believe that the whole 60th chapter of Isaiah relates to the redemption of the Jews; it is when speaking of Israel that he says, "Thy light is come," that is the fulfilment of what the watchman says: "The morning cometh." "Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee; and the city had no need of the sun nor of the moon, for the glory of God, and of the Lamb, did lighten it." Now mark ver. 3, "And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising;" and, speaking to the Jews, "then shalt thou see and flow together, and thine heart shall fear and be enlarged; because the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee; the forces of the Gentiles shall cover thee." And then at ver. 9, "Surely the isles shall wait for me, and the ships of Tarshish first, to bring thy sons from far, their silver

and their gold with them, unto the name of the Lord thy God, and to the Holy One of Israel, because he hath glorified thee. And the sons of strangers shall build up thy walls," the walls of the city spoken of by Ezekiel, "and their kings shall minister unto thee; for in my wrath I smote thee; but in my favour have I had mercy on thee:" *i. e.* "the morning cometh." "Therefore," he proceeds, "thy gates shall be open continually; they shall not be shut day nor night." And then at ver. 19, "The sun shall be no more thy light by day, neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee: but the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory. The sun shall no more go down, neither shall thy moon withdraw itself; for the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended. Thy people also shall be all righteous; they shall inherit the land"—*i. e.* Palestine, the promised land—"for ever: the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified." And again, in Isaiah lxii., you have the allusion to the watchman, "For Zion's sake I will not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest,

till the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth. And the Gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory; and thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord shall name." "And this is the name of the city—the Lord is there." Then at verse 6: "I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem." Do not say, that belongs to us Gentiles; you may give a spiritual application to that blessed truth to us; but literally and strictly it belongs to the Jews. "I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, which shall never hold their peace day nor night; ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence; and give Him no rest till He establish, and till He make Jerusalem a praise in the earth." Do we pray for the Jews as we ought?—do we labour for the conversion of the Jews as we ought? I believe we do not. We do not do all we ought to do for the Gentiles; but we ought to do something for the Jews, if it were only for a testimony. I believe their conversion is yet future; but our duty to the Jews is unequivocal, and I fear that we Gentiles do not discharge that duty.

One other chapter I must quote: and I quote this chapter to show what to me is so blessed a discovery, the habit of looking at these Scriptures in their literal aspect. We are not to make the Scripture a piece of wax, to be twisted in any form our fancy may suggest, but just to look at God's word as God has given it, and to understand it literally, whenever we can. Turn, then, to Ezekiel xxxvii., and see what God says there of the restoration of the Jews: "The hand of the Lord was upon me, and carried me out in the Spirit of the Lord, and set me down in the midst of the valley which was full of bones." I may mention, before I proceed, that I doubt not that the reader has heard sermons on this passage, preaching the resurrection. Unquestionably it does prove this, because the literal resurrection is the basis of this parable; or he may have heard sermons explaining from it that man, in his natural state, is like "a valley of dry bones;" and this is perfectly legitimate: but if you will read the chapter as God plainly meant it, namely, to teach the first great lesson —the restoration of the Jews and their conversion—you will see how beautiful and how consistent it is. "And HE caused me to pass by

them round about; and behold, there were many in the open valley: and lo, they were very dry. And he said unto me, Can these bones live? Just giving utterance to what the scoffing world would say—"Watchman, what of the night?" "And I answered, O Lord God, thou knowest. Again he said unto me, Prophesy upon these bones, and say unto them, O ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. Thus saith the Lord God, Behold I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live; and I will lay sinews upon you, and will bring flesh upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and ye shall live: and ye shall know that I am the Lord. So I prophesied, as I was commanded; and, as I prophesied, there was a noise: and behold, a shaking; and the bones came together, bone to his bone. And when I beheld, lo! the sinews and the flesh came upon them,"—a progressive change taking place, which I will produce facts to show is now in the course of operation; "and the skin covered them above; but there was no breath in them." Perhaps this indicates their return to their own land, prior to their conversion, which I think may be the fact.

"Then he said unto me, Prophesy unto the wind," or, as it might be translated, "spirit," for it is the same word—"Prophesy, son of man, and say to the wind, Thus saith the Lord God, Come from the four winds, O breath! and breathe upon these slain, that they may live. So I prophesied, as he commanded me; and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army." And then comes the interpretation of the parable: "Then he said unto me, Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel, behold, they say our bones are dried, and our hope is lost: we are cut off fo our parts. Therefore prophesy, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, O my people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel. And ye shall know that I am the Lord when I have opened your graves, O my people, and brought you out of your graves, and shall put my spirit in you, and ye shall live; and I shall place you in your own land: then shall ye know that I the Lord have spoken it, and performed it, saith the Lord." And then, at verse 21, "Say unto them, Thus

saith the Lord God, Behold, I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen whither they be gone, and will gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land. And I will make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king to them all,"—this seems to refer rather to the prince about whom we read than to the Messiah,—"and they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all. Neither shall they defile themselves any more with idols, nor with their detestable things, nor with any of their transgressions; but I will save them out of all their dwelling-places wherein they have sinned, and will cleanse them. So they shall be my people, and I will be their God. And David my servant shall be king over them,"—whether this be the Messiah or not, I am not prepared to say,—"and they shall all have one shepherd; they shall also walk in my statutes, and observe my judgments, and do them. And they shall dwell in the land which I have given to Jacob my servant, wherein your fathers have dwelt; and they shall dwell therein, even they, and their children, and their children's children

for ever." And then, at verse 27, "My tabernacle, also, shall be with them; yea, I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And the heathen shall know that I, the Lord, do sanctify Israel, when my sanctuary"—referring to the subsequent chapters in the same book—"shall be in the midst of them for evermore."

Does not all this clearly and demonstrably refer to the restoration of the whole house of Israel? "The morning cometh." This seems, first, to be the prophet speaking to the bones—"Prophesy to the bones;" then the bones begin to move, then come the sinews and flesh—but still there is no life; then the Spirit comes into them, and they live for ever. There must first of all then, be a shaking, or preliminary movement, among this ancient people, before their final restoration and glory. Such passages as these, for instance, show it: "And they shall remember me in the far countries;" "and they shall live with their children, and turn again." And again, "They shall call upon my name, and I will hear them, and I will say, It is my people:" as if the first cry of the children of Israel, from the distant ends of the earth, instantly met the response of God:

"Why! there is my ancient people!" just as the father said of his prodigal son: "He was dead, and is alive again,: he was lost, and is found." So, when Israel shall begin to cry to God for deliverance, He will instantly say, "This is my people." And he adds, "Thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left." And, in the book of Zechariah, ii. 7, we have the following passage, "Ho, ho, come forth, and flee from the land of the north, saith the Lord; for I have spread you abroad as the four winds of the heaven, saith the Lord." "The land of the north" is always used in Scripture for the northern parts of Europe. An ukase issued by the autocrat of all the Russias is this year just put into execution; it orders the Jews to cease to be distinguished from the rest of his subjects by the peculiar dress which has been worn by them for the last five hundred years. The emperor of Russia may make slaves, or he may make nobles, but he cannot make a Jew a Gentile. God has pronounced their insulation from the nations, and that they shall be a separate and distinct people from all others upon earth.

Sir Moses Montefiore, a leader among the Jews in this country, has been visiting the emperor of Russia; he has been most graciously received, and the emperor has given full permission to ten thousand Jews to go home, if they like, to Palestine.

But it is further said, in the same passage, "Deliver thyself, O Zion, O thou that dwellest with the daughter of Babylon." Babylon, as I have already observed, is the prophetic name for the great mystery of iniquity, the Roman apostasy. What has been the situation of the Jews in Rome for the last twelve hundred years? They have been crowded together like swine, driven into a place called the Ghetto, and subjected to every hardship and suffering. When the pope disappeared, the Jews were emancipated from the Ghetto; they laboured night and day to prevent the return of the pope; and they were seen reading to the modern Romans, 2 Thess. iii., representing one that sits in the temple of God, as if he were God, and they told the Romans, This is the very picture of your pope; you must not let him come back—you must keep him away at all hazards. Here was the Jew struggling for

emancipation, hearing from the depths of his ruin the accents of his God, "Deliver thyself, O Zion, that dwellest with the daughter of Babylon;" and every well-informed Jew will tell you that when Popery is destroyed, the Messiah will come, and they shall return to the land of their fathers. It has been very recently observed, that more Jews have been truly converted during the last ten or fifteen years than from the downfall of Jerusalem to the commencement of the present age. This is proved by the condition of Palestine at this moment. In the age of Constantine the Great, there were just five hundred Jews in Palestine. In the twelfth century, and after the Crusades, there were a thousand Jews in Palestine, and two hundred in Jerusalem. In 1848, there were twenty thousand Jews in Palestine, and ten thousand in Jerusalem; and the mixed population is diminishing every day; so that we cannot but say, indeed, "The morning cometh."

A missionary from Constantinople writes that the Jews in that city are, at this moment, actuated universally by an intense spirit of religious inquiry; and he says that he was in the

habit of always saying to an apparently very pious and devout Jew, "When will the Messiah come?" And the answer he gave for a long time was, "The Messiah cometh:" but one day, instead of making his usual reply, the Jew said, "The truth is, the Messiah is come; and if you will show me a place of safety from the scimitar of the Moslem, I will show you ten thousand Jews ready to say that the Messiah is come, and that Jesus of Nazareth is that Messiah." Who knows but that, at this moment, there may be a Christian people among the Jews, just as there is a Protestant people in the very heart of the Church of Rome, groaning under their bondage, but waiting for their deliverence? In Germany, multitudes of the Jews have cast off the Talmud, which is to the Jew what tradition is to the Roman Catholic. But, in Germany, many of the Jews have, during the the last few years, cast it off; and there is a synagogue in London where a Jew preaches without the Talmud, despising and rejecting it. And it is stated by the late Prussian ambassador at Rome, that there is a general movement of inquiry among the Jews at this moment, and that something will take place to restore them very

speedily to the land of their fathers. The Rev. T. Grimshawe has stated that vast numbers of Jews are at this moment preparing to emigrate to Palestine; and Tholuck, the distinguished German divine, says that more Jews have been converted during the last fifty years than during the whole eighteen hundred that preceded them. It is also a very remarkable fact, that nearly all the newspapers of Germany are at present in the hands of Jews, and under their control; and I need not tell you that the gold of all Europe is so much in their hands that they can make a monetary crisis almost whenever they choose. Why have they all their property in a portable shape? You do not find a Jew with property in land or in houses; but he sits loose to the nations, in order that he may be ready to go at a moment's warning, and return to take possession of his own inheritance. You are constructing railroads in order to make money, and steamboats in order to make so much per cent. All this may be very proper and honourable; but these will serve only to convey the Jew more speedily to his own land. Thus, while man is laying down rails in order to prosecute his own purposes, he is really

making a highway for ancient Israel to come forth from their long and dreary exile, with all their money and portable property in their possession, and to return to their own land, there to rebuild their temple, and there to be converted by a Pentecost far more magnificent and glorious than even that first Pentecost which was so precious, and is so precious still.

The reader, perhaps, doubts the truth of my statement, that the Jews are to be restored in their unconverted state, and then, after their restoration, to be converted to Christianity. One passage on which I ground this conclusion will be found in Zech. xii. 1: "The burden of the word of the Lord for Israel, saith the Lord, which stretched forth the heavens, and layeth the foundation of the earth, and formeth the spirit of man within him. Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of trembling unto all the people round about, when they shall be in the siege both against Judah and against Jerusalem." This seems to allude to that great battle which we learn from the Apocalypse is to be fought in the last days, called the Battle of Armageddon; and as far as we can gather, it points to Palestine as the field of that battle:

"And in that day will I make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people: all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces, though all the people of the earth be gathered together against it." Then v. 8.—"He that is feeble among them at that day shall be as David; and the house of David shall be as God, as the angel of the Lord before them." Then at ver. 10, after this description, which plainly contemplates the Jews restored to their land—comes the promise—"And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him as one mourneth for his only son; and shall be in bitterness as one that is in bitterness for his first-born. In that day there shall be a great mourning in Jerusalem, as the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddon. And the land shall mourn, every family apart"—denoting that the land shall be divided into parts, each tribe occupying its place—"the family of the house of David apart, and their wives apart; the family of the house of Nathan apart, and their wives apart; the family of the

house of Levi apart, and their wives apart; the family of the house of Shimei apart, and their wives apart: all the families that remain, every family apart, and their wives apart." Such seems to me to be the mind of God upon this subject.

I have thus explained what appears to me to be the meaning of the declaration of the watchman, "The morning cometh"—the morning of the restoration of Israel. But I must notice, before I part with this portion of my subject, that whilst it is morning for the Jew, it will also be a blessed morning for the Gentile. It may be said, "You have been preaching comfort to the Jews:" so I have; but in that comfort I have been preaching comfort to the Gentile also. What does the Apostle say, "For if the casting away of the Jews be the riches of the Gentiles, what shall the receiving of them be but life from the dead." I say, all have an interest in that morning. There are, as I have said, many bright signs significant of its approach; great prophetic epochs are coming to a close: warning sounds of the approach of the doom of Babylon resound already from sea to sea, and from the Tiber to the ends of the

earth. We see, also, a forelight of the coming day, in a new sense of brotherhood beginning to come down upon all sections of our land, unprecedented in the history of our country. We see papers beginning to speak and write about the wrongs and sufferings of the poor; we see great men coming down from their isolation, and visiting and ministering to the wants of the poor and needy; and men are beginning, for the first time, to recognise the fact, that the Queen has a sister in the humblest cellar, and the greatest prince in our land has a brother in the poorest labourer. This beautiful, and deep, and growing sense of brotherhood, is an earnest and foretaste of that day when the poor shall cease from the land, and all shall be rich, unspeakably rich, because unspeakably great. The 65th and 67th psalms are psalms for the last days; and what so delights one in singing these beautiful psalms is, the feeling that we are joining with the Jew, and that, while single, our joy is incomplete unless it be echoed from the voice and reflected from the countenance of that Jew. In these psalms one of the features of the last days is thus described—"The earth shall yield her increase." What are the discus-

sions that agitate rival and contending political parties, whose opinions and names I neither comprehend nor care to decide upon? Whether it is possible to cultivate the earth more successfully—whether it is capable of producing more. The ancient prophecies of God are the modern problems of mankind. All these things are, under the control of God, leading to one great result—"the morning cometh." The first rays indicate the rise of the millennial sun.

Each year on which we enter, let me also add, is a stage in that great procession. 1849 passed away, dark with shadows and terrible disasters: 1850 has come, and unveiled a new Papal conspiracy; we hope that in 1851 the tops of Lebanon may be sprinkled with the first rays of the approaching sun, and the streams of Jordan reflect his first beams. Whether it shall be so or not, this we know, that the great chronological epochs which relate to the Jews are being crowded together and concentrated in every day that now passes. It is the opinion of many that we are entering remarkable years. I read a statement in a paper which reflects the opinions and the sentiments of mankind, describing a subject in which I take no personal

interest, viz. the preponderance of money in the Bank of England, which the *Times* said will make future years of wonders and miracles. It is, perhaps, like Balaam's unconscious prophecy. The unconscious prophecies of the world are often its truest ones. It is not, however, for us to prophesy, but soberly to study the Word of God. And if we are the children of God—if we are Christians indeed, when the morning cometh how welcome will it be! and if we shall not be spared through the days of one year to enter upon those of another, it will be but anticipating the promise, and giving us the morning rays sooner than the rest of mankind. Come what may, if our hearts are in the right place—if our footing be on the Rock of ages, to us there cometh, and will come soon, a blessed, bright, and glorious morning.

I have occupied so much space in delineating the morning—the bright side of the picture, that I have left myself too little, in the present chapter, for describing the night that cometh also, and the more practical duties that follow from it.

CHAPTER II.

THE MORNING COMETH, AND ALSO THE NIGHT.

"Know well my soul, God's hand controls;
Whate'er thou fearest;
Round him in calmest music rolls
Whate'er thou hearest.

"And that cloud itself, which now before thee
Lies dark in view,
Shall, with beams of light from the inner glory,
Be stricken through."

"The burden of Dumah. He calleth unto me out of Seir, Watchman, what of the night? Watchman, what of the night? The watchman said, The morning cometh, and also the night: if ye will enquire, enquire ye: return, come."—Isaiah xxi. 11, 12.

In my former examination of the passage at the head of this chapter, I stated that Dumah is only another name for the land of Edom, or Idumea,—that the word burden is an expression used by the prophets, when they mean that they have a heavy or calamitous message to deliver, which weighs upon their hearts like lead, till

they unfold and make it known. It is, therefore, the prophetic preface to predictions of judgment. I explained, also, the position that is here assumed:—First, it might be applied to the time of the Babylonish captivity, and with reference to the restoration of Judah after it. But it appears from the language employed in parallel passages, to which I have turned the attention of my reader at great length, that Edom is used simply as the type or foreshadow of the world, as Babylon is used repeatedly, and in the Apocalypse especially, as the foreshadow or actual name of the great apostasy. I therefore suppose that the hour at which the question is asked is the hour that passes. The person who asks the question, calling out of Mount Seir—Seir being the capital of Idumea, or the mountain on which the chief city was built—seems to be some proud, and haughty, and worldly individual, indifferent to religion, and having neither studied it nor feeling disposed to do so; who asks the watchman in scorn, "What of the night?" This watchman, as I have explained, is supposed to be some solitary sympathiser with the ruin, and hoper in the restoration of Israel. He is looking for

a day when that down-trodden people shall be restored—when the exile of so many hundred years shall be ended, and they shall return to the land of their fathers, and inherit it in all its glory and renovated beauty and fertility. This watchman, looking for the restoration of the house of Israel, hears a scorner from some great capital say, "Watchman, what of the night? You have long been looking for the prosperity of the Jew; it is long in coming; may it not be a delusion? May you not be altogether mistaken in expecting such a thing? And may we not be justified in still treading down the Jew, exacting from him all we can,—applying to him all the threats of the Bible, and taking to ourselves all the promises of the Bible?" To this inquiry the watchman answers—"The morning cometh, and also the night." I have explained what that morning is by parallel passages, and proved, that while it may be applied, amongst other things, to the coming prosperity of the Church, it does mean, primarily, the morning of the restoration of Israel, and their conversion to the Saviour.

But he adds: "And also the night cometh." On this clause I have not made any remarks in

the last chapter; in this, therefore, I will endeavour to illustrate what is meant by the expression—"The night also cometh;" and then I will proceed to consider the remainder of the verse—"If ye will enquire, enquire ye: return, come." Now, if we apply "night" to signify calamity to Edom, or Idumea, to which it primarily refers, we shall find that a night did come, and did overtake the whole land of Idumea; and that the most awful predictions embodied in the ancient prophets have been literally and strictly fulfilled in the history of that land. For instance we are told by the prophet Jeremiah (chapter xlix. 7), "Concerning Edom"—*i. e.* Idumea, or Dumah—"Thus saith the Lord of hosts: Is wisdom no more in Teman? is counsel perished from the prudent? is their wisdom vanished? Flee ye; turn back, dwell deep, O inhabitants of Dedan; for I will bring the calamity of Esau upon him, the time that I will visit him. If grape-gatherers come to thee, would they not leave some gleaning grapes? If thieves by night, they will destroy till they have enough. But I have made Esau bare; I have uncovered his secret places, and he shall not be able to hide himself; his seed

is spoiled, and his brethren and his neighbours, and he is not." And then he proceeds: "Thus saith the Lord, Behold, they whose judgment was not to drink of the cup, have assuredly drunken; and art thou he that shall altogether go unpunished? Thou shalt not go unpunished, but thou shalt surely drink of it. For I have sworn by myself, saith the Lord, that Bozrah shall become a desolation, a reproach, a waste, and a curse; and all the cities thereof shall be perpetual wastes." Then at verse 15: "I will make thee small among the heathen, and despised among men. Thy terribleness hath deceived thee, and the pride of thy heart, O thou that dwellest in the clefts of the rock, that holdest the height of the hill:" for Petra, the capital of Edom, was built on the solid rock, and its walls, and palaces, and tombs, were cut out of it. "Though thou shouldest make thy nest as high as the eagle, I will bring thee down from thence, saith the Lord. Also, Edom shall be a desolation: every one that goeth by it shall be astonished, and shall hiss at all the plagues thereof. As in the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah, and the neighbouring cities thereof, saith the Lord, no man shall

abide there, neither shall a son of man dwell in it." Almost the same prophecy, but, if possible, in stronger words, is found in Ezekiel xxv., to which I need not now refer at any greater length.

The question then is, Has this night, thus graphically pourtrayed and predicted by Jeremiah, fallen upon Edom? Is there evidence in history that what God pronounced in prophecy has been literally fulfilled? I beg attention briefly to the evidence of it. I attach very great importance to this subject, on the ground that, if every prediction in the past that has been accomplished, not in the lump (if I may use the expression), but literally, exactly, letter for letter, prophecy and performance, we may reasonably infer that every prediction which relates to the future shall literally and strictly, prophecy and performance, be fulfilled too. Recollecting, then, the words I have read, hear the evidence of travellers, from whose writings I will read one or two very brief extracts. "Edom," we are told by the prophet, "is to lie desolate from generation to generation, and lie waste." Volney, the infidel historian, describes the modern Idumea as "having no place

of habitation throughout the whole of it." Here was God's prophet, saying, "Edom shall lie waste:" here is Satan's prophet, for such Volney was, a scoffing infidel (not an honest disbeliever), pronouncing, when he visits it, ignorant that he was declaring the fulfilment of prophecy, that it is just what God said that it should be. Burckhardt, another traveller, states that, "Idumea is a vast stony desert, overgrown with herbs, and plants of all sorts; and yet it must have been once," he says, "thickly inhabited. Great must have been the opulence," he adds, "of a city which could produce such monuments as these, cut out of the solid rock." You will find in a volume of Dr. Keith's work on the fulfilment of prophecy, several engravings from daguerreotype and talbotype views taken on the spot, which will show how minutely prophecy has described the state of Edom, and how exactly it has been carried into effect. Another traveller, on visiting Idumea, says, "Nothing can exceed the desolation of the view from the summit of Mount Hor—'a land of barrenness and ruin —a land accursed of God.'"

Such is the dispassionate, disinterested tes-

timony of another traveller. Mausoleums, and palaces, and noble halls, are cut out of the solid rock, of gigantic dimensions, but now they are only the habitation of owls, and bats, and bitterns, and wild beasts. And the recent American traveller, Stephens, in his travels, which are extremely interesting, writes—it is true, as a Christian who is aware of the prophecy, but who was not the less likely, on that account, to be impartial in his description :—" I would that the sceptic could stand as I did among the ruins of the city, and amid rocks, and then open the sacred book and read the words of the inspired penman, written when this desolate place was one of the greatest cities of the world. I see the scoff arrested, the cheek pale, the lips quivering, and the heart quaking with fear, as the ruined city comes forth to him with a voice loud and powerful, as of one risen from the dead; and though he would not believe Moses and the prophets, he believes the hand-writing of God in the ruins and desolation around him."

So minutely has the whole prediction been fulfilled! I have quoted these passages in order to show that the night predicted has come upon Edom in all its blackness; so that there is not

one ray of light more than the prophet said there would be; there is not one atom of desolation less than prophecy was burdened with. I add one more confirmatory remark on the literal and exact fulfilment of prophecy, by quoting the example of Nineveh. All of you must have read of the grandeur of that celebrated city, and of the terrible desolation which was predicted to overtake it. Now many persons, when they read those fearful catalogues of the judgments of Nineveh, which are contained in the Old Testament prophets, Ezekiel and Nahum, said, "In these days they had not the grandeur, the civilization that we have; they had not the railroads, the steamboats, the ships, the magnificent architecture, the progress in science, the advancement in the arts of modern times: and no doubt the prophets spoke from their own ideas of a grandeur, which was at best very puny indeed." But Layard has discovered that that city was possessed of a grandeur and a magnificence so vast, that London placed beside it would look mean and pale. What may have been its internal wealth, or the extent of its commerce, we know not; but of its splendid architecture, of its vast grandeur, beauty, and

extent, as a mighty city, the prophets have given a description which has been proved to the very letter; and thus it is seen that it was not "according to their own puny ideas of magnificence," but that they wrote according to fact, when they described the glory and the splendour of ancient Nineveh;—while the same prophets who tell you of its then existing grandeur, tell you, in terms equally distinct, that all her pride should be utterly cast down and destroyed. It is declared by one prophet, that so great will be her desolation, that God says of her, "I will make thy grave." What has been the state of Nineveh for the last two thousand years?—Literally buried. What has Layard lately done?—He has just opened its grave, and paid the wandering Arabs of the desert to aid him in raising this city, as it were, from the dead. Nahum says of this city, "She is empty, and void, and waste" (ii. 10.) "And it shall come to pass, that all they that look upon thee shall flee from thee, and say, Nineveh is laid waste: who will bemoan her?" (iii. 7.) The poor Arabs and Bedouins, hired by Layard to come and assist him in his excavations said, "The place is haunted by spirits." They knew not whether

he was a magician, "calling up spirits from the vasty deep," or a mere money-maker, searching for hidden treasures; but they were terrified and fled. The prophet Zephaniah says, "He will stretch out his hand against the north, and destroy Assyria; and will make Nineveh a desolation, and dry, like a wilderness;" and, again, "Desolation shall be on the threshold of Nineveh." Now hear what Layard says as a commentary on this prophecy: "The scene around is worthy of the ruin he is contemplating. Desolation meets desolation: a feeling of awe succeeds to wonder, for there is nothing to relieve the mind, to lead to hope, or tell of what is gone by. These huge mounds of Assyria made a deeper impression on me, and gave rise to more serious thought and more earnest reflection, than the temples of Baalbec or the theatres of Ionia."—Chap. i. p. 7. London, 1849. And he continues giving further descriptions, which would occupy too much space to give at length, showing that the minutest prediction contained in the Bible, concerning the fate of Nineveh, has met its complete fulfilment. How can you account for this? As Mr. Layard says, Nineveh had buildings as vast, as strong,

as magnificent as Egypt; Egypt is pronounced and predicted to become the basest of kingdoms: "Slaves," we are told, "shall rule over her;" and such is her state at this day; but its monuments are still standing. Nineveh was predicted to be buried, with her monuments, in one vast grave. Mr. Layard has opened that grave. Depend upon it, the longer we live, the longer we shall see that that book called the Bible is the most wonderful phenomenon in the universe; that there is nothing to be compared with it; none but fools can scoff at it; none but ignoramuses deny it; and the longer we read, and the more we know, the more we shall feel "God's word is truth."

Looking, then, at these predictions of the night that were to come upon these nations, and having seen, in the cases I have cited, that threat fulfilled, I must now show that the same night, according to the measure of it that was to be meted out, has come upon other cities. Memphis, with its vast structures; Thebes, with its hundred gates; Palmyra, with all its glories, are at this moment shrouded by different portions of the great predicted night; and they cry from the midst of that dense darkness which

environs them, "The night has come upon us; and it cometh upon you also!" Assyria, and Persia, and Media, and Carthage, and Greeee, and Rome, have been sueeessively overwhelmed by the waves of barbarism; and from the Dead Sea, in which they have found their tomb, they ery, "The night has eome upon us; and it cometh upon you also!" And have we not had recently, from 1848 to 1851, on the continent of Europe, some of the fringes of that night falling upon its great nations and great eapitals? What a night was that which we had, not many months ago, which fell, dark and dreary, first upon France, and then upon every eountry on the Continent!—Kings were paralyzed—great statesmen were at their wits' end: dynasties that had rooted themselves for a thousand years, and twineed their fibres, as it were, with the very structure of society, were torn up by the tempest, and swept away like Arab tents, or like houses of eards, till they had to be rebuilt from the very foundation! And would that we could see now, from all that God's word says, that that night is past! The morning, I believe, is very near: a morning more bright and beautiful than ever gilded the mountain tops; but a night,

dark, dreary, and calamitous, we are sure, will precede it.

I have alluded to the present state of the continent of Europe, and here let me notice one source of its night. The schoolmasters in France are now generally teachers of Pantheism. They are specimens of what schoolmasters may become, if we do not take care that they are Christians also; that they shall know and teach the Bible, as well as know and teach secular learning. The schoolmasters in France, it is now discovered, are teaching not only Pantheism, but Atheism and Socialism, of the vilest description, in almost every commune throughout the land; so much so, that the Legislature has been obliged to interfere, and, if possible, to repress it. Germany overflows with Pantheism and Atheism at this very moment. Popery, I admit, is losing its foothold; and it is the probability, nay, it is my hope, that Popery and Pantheism will soon fight it out upon the stage of Europe, Satan thus becoming a house divided against itself, that the triumphs of the gospel may be hastened amid the chaos. And in the last days we are told that a night will come when the sun shall be darkened, and the moon

shall not give her light; the sea and the waves shall be roaring; the stars shall fall from heaven, and great political powers shall be overthrown, and men's hearts shall fail them for fear of the things that are coming upon the earth. And St. Peter tells us, in his Second Epistle, that "the day of the Lord shall come as a thief in the night, in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat; the earth also, and the works that are therein, shall be burned up." That is the night; then "the morning cometh:" "nevertheless, we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness."

And, when looking at this night, which is coming on all the nations of the earth, what hopes, what feelings may we entertain concerning that which is so dear to us—our own native land! I do believe that the judgments which have fallen on the continent of Europe have, in some degree, been blessed to us. I believe that we, as subjects, are more attached to our great institutions; and that our rulers have been taught by recent judgments, less to depend upon the brute force of bayonets, more upon

moderation, upon goodness, justice, equity, loyal hearts, and a holy and sanctified population; I believe, too, that the recent epidemic, which scourged us so severely, has been eminently and widely sanctified. I hear it stated on all hands, that our churches and chapels are more crowded than they have been known to be within the memory of man. I hear from all sources, that there is spreading amongst us a deep and insatiable thirst for something that will stand man in stead, if so terrible an epidemic should visit us again. We know the fact, that the great extremes of society—poverty and wealth—have been pressed together by recent judgments, and that a deeper and a nobler sense of brotherhood has been diffused among all the branches of our population; and that this great country of ours—great, notwithstanding all its faults, its imperfections, and its shortcomings—is beginning to assume what Milton said it ought ever to assume—the precedence of teaching the nations of the earth how to live. May we not, then, venture to hope that those funeral bells which have been tolling the crash of thrones, the downfall of dynasties, the requiem of great nations, are about to change their notes

to British ears, and to ring out a marriage peal, announcing that blessed day when the first and the last and the best tone shall be, "The marriage of the Lamb is come, and his bride hath made herself ready?"

Now, in uttering such hopes, and in speaking upon such topics, I cannot but allude occasionally to social and political events; and I think it is right that I should allude to them. I do feel that it is not enough to furnish theological essays. It is my duty—it is my privilege, to try, not out of my own wisdom, but from God's own Word, to give living direction, and to bring forth things new, provided they be true, as well as old. Now, I am told by mercantile men that there is a prospect of what they call a "surplus of money," when men will no longer be able to obtain the same amount of interest for their money which they used to get, and that the mercantile world is frightened lest there be coming upon it some terrible crisis. Now, my dear reader, excuse me if I call upon you to be on your guard; remember, that making haste to be rich, if you miss your object, is making haste to ruin. Remember, that in proportion to the chance—to use your own phrase-

ology—of a great fortune, is the chance of total and irretrievable ruin. Let me give you old-fashioned prescriptions—and depend upon it they are old only because we, in our ignorance, think that they are so—"Be patient;" "Be content with such things as ye have;" "Let your moderation be known unto all men." It may be that our worst trial is coming; it may be that our commercial depression was nothing—that the failure of our harvest was nothing—that the epidemic was nothing: it may be that our sorest trial will be this surplus of money in the money market. We can hold pretty steadily the half-full cup; the full cup it is very difficult to hold steadily. The man who wraps his mantle tightly round him in the storm, lets it go when the sun begins to shine; never is a church or a nation in so great peril as when Satan shows either of them all the wealth and kingdoms of the world and says, "All these will I give you, if you will fall down and worship me." "Watch," therefore, "and pray;" "Let your moderation be known unto all men:" "Having food and raiment, be therewith content." God may be about to visit us by a new trial. Let us seek His grace, and His strength,

to enable us to pass through it. Let us remember that "the morning cometh, and the night too." Let us be patient in the one; let us hope for joy and blessings in the other.

Let me now say to those who scoff like him who called from Mount Seir, "Watchman, what of the night?"—who are too much in the world and of the world to think anything about religion—to those who live simply to get rich—who, like Gallio, "care for none of those things,"—"The night cometh." And it will be to you an awful, a terrible, an endless night—a night whose first twilight will reveal to you the dreadful truth, "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved." To every branch of Church and State there cometh a night before there cometh a morning. There is a very solemn announcement made by St. Peter, that "judgment always begins at the house of God." Whenever you see great schisms in churches, great apostasies, great defections, great corruption of doctrine,—you see judgment beginning at the house of God, which will fall with more consuming fury upon the world around. If, then, the Church of this land—and I use the word "Church" not in its

limited, but in its catholic sense, as embracing all Christians who hold the Head, Christ, and cleave to God's blessed Word—if the Church of our country shall give heed to other lights than the Sun of Righteousness,—if its leaves shall not be for the healing, but for the poisoning of the nations of the earth,—if hers shall not be the fruits of the Spirit, but the apples of Sodom, all beauty outside, but all corruption and rottenness within,—if her members shall learn to seek their nourishment in holy water, in baptismal regeneration, and apostolical succession, and such like figments and heresies, that ought to have been exploded long ago,—if the soil on which she shall grow be the sustentation fund, or money on the voluntary principle, or Acts of Parliament—then the result will be that she will become like one of those old trees that we meet with sometimes in our country, where the sap is dried, the wood is decayed, while the bark alone stands, and reptiles and all venomous creatures grow and breed amid its recesses: she will be like that tree, incapable of bringing forth and putting out leaves, only fit to be cut down as a cumberer of the ground. But let the Church of the Lord

Jesus Christ cease to quarrel, sect with sect,—let her rule and standard be the Word of God, let her light be the beams of the Sun of Righteousness,—let the air in which her branches wave be the pure air of heaven,—let every church shed its dead leaves, and cut off and cast away its dead branches, and seek new life and new vigour, and put forth new buds,—and that church will stand and flourish, and spread its boughs from the river to the ends of the earth. A night may come upon her that will strip her of all her walls, her defences, and her battlements; but life is within her—the vitality that God gives and that God keeps, and that nothing shall be able to exhaust or to destroy. We must look less on the things that are seen, and more on the things that are unseen; our hope must be in the purity, the efficiency, the spirituality of the church: for the days are coming when it must be founded on nothing else whatever.

But to individuals, as well as to nations and churches there cometh a night—a night which is alluded to and intimated a thousand times—the sure night of death; when the shadow that now darkens the threshold shall cross it no more, and the well-known countenance shall be

gazed upon no more. The night is coming; the day is drawing to a close; there will be space for no more work; the body will wait in the tomb for the dawn of the resurrection-morn, and the soul will be in happiness before God.

Such, then, are the different significations, or rather the different applications, of the night that cometh. The prophet concludes with these words, "If ye will enquire, enquire ye: return, come." Enquire, "What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" Enquire, "What must I do to be saved?" Enquire, "What think ye of Christ?" Enquire the way to heaven, with your faces thitherward. These are important enquiries, as important as any enquiries you can institute, and worthy of research as much as the ruins of Nineveh, the structure of the earth or of the sea, or the distance and the density of the planets of our system. And you are not left without the elements of such enquiry. There is a book called the Bible—it is the inspiration of God—it is His Word. Are its prophecies mere dreams? Are its promises charming delusions? or, Are they "yea and amen in Christ Jesus?" Enquire ye. Enquire whence this

book is, and enquire what this book is. Deal with it most severely; treat the claims of the Bible with the most rigid, unswerving severity. It is a matter of such importance, that you must be satisfied with nothing less than the clearest and the most conclusive evidence. Interrogate all history, investigate all its contents, and enquire, ask yourselves if every man spake like this Man? Enqure whence this book is, whose word the winds and the waves of prejudice and passion no sooner hear than they instantly obey. "If ye will enquire, enquire ye." And more than that.—You who profess to receive this book, you who accépt this religion, let me ask, What is Christianity to you? Is it anything more to you than baptism? What has it done for you? Pray enquire, Has it merely given you a name in baptism?—is that all? Has it only given you a seat at the communion table?—is that all? Has it only made you a Christian by profession? Are you children of the day, or children of the night? Are you living branches of the living Vine, or fragments glued on by outward profession? Is your footing on the Rock? Is your title the Lord's finished righteousness? Are you born

again? It is not applicable only to penal settlements, and gaols, and penitentiaries, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God:"—it is true of the greatest, the richest, the noblest, the best,—"Except ye be born again," you may be everything else, but "Except ye be born again ye cannot see the kingdom of God." "Search the Scriptures;" examine these things; enquire if these things be so or not. The disbeliever will be condemned, not for his scepticism, but because he never used the means of getting rid of that scepticism. Let us ask ourselves whether we have ever spent as much time in reading the evidences of Christianity as we have in examining the petal of a flower, the history of a tree, the crystallisation of a mineral. Have we ever really sat down deliberately determined to come to the conclusion that this is God's book, or Satan's lie? There cannot be anything between: and no man is consistent unless he either rejects the Bible as an impudent and atrocious imposture, or loves and lives the Bible as the very word of God himself. To you, Reader, I say, "Enquire."

But the prophet says too, what I say, Reader,

to you, "Return." He supposes, naturally and beautifully, that enquiry will always lead to conviction. So it ever has done, and so it ever will: and, assuming that the result of the previous enquiry will be this step, which is a grand step, though not all that is required—the conviction that God's book is true, then the next step is, "Return." If you have gone astray, "Return." If you are in the prodigal's land, say, "I will arise and go to this Father, whom this book makes known." If you have gone astray, say, as the prophet said of old, "Take away our iniquity, and receive us graciously. Asshur shall not save us: we will not ride upon horses, neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, Ye are our gods; for in thee the fatherless findeth mercy." And then the Lord will answer, "I will heal their backsliding; I will love them freely; for mine anger is turned away." Then let us retrace our steps; redeem the time; be reconciled to God. If the result of our enquiry be, that this book is true, that this is God's book, then let us "return"—from darkness to light, from apostasy to truth, from infidelity to Christianity; from that restlessness, and disquiet, and uneasiness of con-

science, which will not let one say, "Christianity is true," because that would necessitate the banishment of sins in which so many now indulge. Let us leave that restlessness and disquiet which is neither the peace of the world nor the peace of God, and return to Him from whom we have gone astray.

And then, says the prophet, adding another word, not only "return," but "come." This is the old sound of the blessed gospel: "Come unto me, all ye that are weary with your researches; all ye that are worn out with the world's cares, and the world's dissatisfaction, and I will give you rest." "Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out." Manasseh, and David, and Saul, and the gaoler of Philippi, came, and were accepted. We have nothing to prepare as a title,—nothing to do as desert, but to come just as we are. We have enquired and found there is a Saviour; we desire to return from the error of our ways; and to meet with acceptance before God. All things are ready. Salvation is not waiting till some miracle is wrought before we come; nor till we have made ourselves different from what we are now;—it is instant closing with Christ;

first, for his forgiveness, as our Priest; next, for his teaching as our Prophet; lastly, for peace, accounting Him as our complete and accomplished righteousness, as our great God, our Sovereign, and gracious Ruler.

Who are they that are truly happy?—the people that have despised the Bible, and rejected it, without enquiry, or they who have enquired, returned, and come? All history will tell you, the latter. And when we come, as we must come, to that period when the night of time shall end, and the light of eternity shall burst upon us, how dreadful if that light shall be discovered, when it is too late to return or retrace our steps, to be the reflection of the flame that is never quenched! but how joyous if the first beams that break upon the soul, as it emerges from the the body in which it has so long tabernacled, be the rising rays of that Sun under whose wings we have found shelter now and in whose rays we shall live for ever and ever!

CHAPTER III.

EARTH NOT YOUR REST.

"Jerusalem, my happy home—
Name ever dear to me
When shall my labours have an end,
In joy, and peace, and thee?"

"Arise ye, and depart; for this is not your rest."—MICAH ii. 10.

IN words that have found an echo in every heart, and are implied in every chapter of the Bible—this world, even in its sunniest spots—in its loftiest, its most favoured, and most sheltered positions, "is not your rest;" that is, it cannot satisfy that great soul that constitutes the man—it cannot meet its deep wants—it cannot lay its strong instinctive yearnings—or constitute that foundation on which we can repose with conscious security, and say, "Here I am satisfied, and here I will rest." It is my object in these remarks to show that the rest

of the soul is not in this dispensation. God himself tells us this world is not our rest. He says: "Set your affection upon things above." "Lay not up for yourselves treasures which moth and rust may consume, and thieves break through and steal." "Labour not (that is, not so much) for the meat that perisheth, but for that which endureth unto everlasting life." He tells us again that here we have no continuing city, nor place of abode. God saw that man's tendency would be to glue his affections constantly to the world; and therefore He has made it the tendency of his providence to detach the affections of his own from the world, on which, if they be fixed, the soul that so fixes them shall perish with the world. All the representations given us of this world, and of our state in it, are fitted to help us to see it is not our rest. It is represented as a journey: men usually long to get over a journey, and to be at home. It is described, again, as a battle; men usually desire that the battle should be finished, that the laurels may be worn. It is illustrated by a voyage: and we desire that the tempest may soon cease to whistle in our ears, and the waves to toss us, and that we may reach the

quiet and sheltered haven. The sailor feels no home on the restless deep! the soldier has no sense of home amid the clarion and the trumpet, and the sounds of battle. The creation itself is too poor to enrich man: the universe is too small to fill the capacities of man's great soul. We were made for something greater, richer—more glorious than the sun, and moon, and stars, and earth, and all things created; for the vast and beauteous world was made for us, not we for the world. What is the natural course and pursuit of every unconverted man? He is seeking rest somewhere. Like the dove, he has gone forth from the ark, and he wants to get some foot-hold in the heights or in the depths, in sunshine or in shadow, on the land or amid the seas, where he can find perfect rest; but, from Soloman to Socrates, and from Socrates to Alexander, and from Alexander to Napoleon, and from Napoleon till now, no spot has been found in the height or in the depth, where he can say—"Now I am satisfied."

Man has tried all things in succession: the soul has set its desires upon wealth; it has resolved to realise a fortune. Sometimes it succeeds—a great fortune is made; but there

is heard, in piercing disappointment, from the very treasures it has accumulated, "Whoso drinketh of these waters shall thirst again." "I take wings (says Riches) and fly away; and if I remain, God will give you wings and take you away." Man's soul has set its heart upon pleasure: it has given license and reign to every sensual appetite and indulgence; but what has been the result? He has only increased the fever that he tried to allay; he has drunk of the cup, and found it most sweet, till he came to the bottom, where he discovered there were dregs there so bitter as to make the whole nauseous and distasteful. The soul has sometimes set its heart upon fame: it has sought to be echoed throughout the wide world,—though a more pitiable spectacle is not to be found on earth, than a man seeking after great fame; who searches every column of the newspaper to see if he can find a paragraph that will praise him; who looks into every man's face for a smile of approval; who listens to every trumpet, whether royal or plebeian, if he can but catch the sound of his own name amid its notes. Poor man! he is seeking honour from shame, dignity from degradation, glory from the very

dust on which he treads! There is no rest here. The soul has fixed its heart, perhaps, upon great elevation: it has sought to be raised to some lofty pinnacle; to sit and enjoy itself, as it were, under the shadow of some Imperial throne. The despot of whom we read in Daniel, teaches us a modern sentiment, by an old example:—

"Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown!"

The events of the east few years teach us that the turrets and pinnacles of the social fabric are first struck down by the lightning, or upheaved by the explosive earthquake that breaks forth beneath them. And a great king, one who had loyal subjects—who had much wealth, who had upon his countenance what crowns cannot give—the sunshine of the favour of his God—felt a throne to be so unsatisfactory, and all its pomp and splendour so unsuitable to the great wants of the great soul that sat upon that throne, that that monarch prayed—"O that I (monarch as I am) had wings, that I might flee away and be at rest!"

These, then, are just the mistaken struggles of man's soul to find rest. Often have I no-

ticed this—and the longer I think of it, the more am I impressed with its truth—that it is the evidence of the fall of man's soul that it seeks satisfaction from anything created; but it is the evidence of its aboriginal grandeur, that it never can get satisfaction from anything created. Until it find the true rest, it feels itself an exile wandering in the desert, entering successive tents, fancying at each it has found a home, till the wind blows each away in succession, or the storm rends them all to pieces. The soul of man, parched with thirst, seeks for some stream it thinks its sees sparkling in the distance: it eagerly pursues it; weary and exhausted, it comes to it, but finds it only the *mirage*—the burning sunbeams reflected from the burning sand; the aggravation of its thirst, and the paralysis of effort! Naked, the soul wants to be clothed, as Eve and Adam desired in Paradise. It has not found that raiment which alone is white and clean—that righteousness which can alone clothe it; but it lays hold on the nearest raiment, even if it should be rags, or the fig-tree leaves, rather than remain naked. Torn from its centre, its only fountain, God, it yearns and longs for

satisfaction, but cannot taste it. It finds its fountains to be cisterns, and its cisterns to be broken cisterns, that will hold no water.

All this is but a commentary on the truth that was uttered no less than two thousand years ago, that neither this world, nor anything that is in it, is our rest; and here, may I not intimate, as I pass, what this teaches? If this be the universal experiment, and if these be the universal results, should we not think of looking above the world for something better? Should we not try to rise above all that is seen, and thirst for that living water which God has promised, and which alone can remove the aching void, satisfy the parched thirst, and give that peace to the soul which passeth all understanding?

God teaches this truth—to his people, and to all who will hear, by his own dispensations. Those on whom you leaned, and to whom you looked up—whose shadows did not darken, but lighten your threshold and your fireside,—are taken away; as if to tell you that the scenes you thought perpetual were but dissolving views; that the flowers that grew so beautifully in your garden, and that you thought would bloom and

yield their fragrance in winter as well as in summer, must all be rooted up, or be turned to corruption and decay. Change, vicissitude, encountered every day, and in all circles; fears within and fightings without; wearisome days and yet more wearisome nights; the aching head—the restless invalid—his thankful look for your patient ministry; the delight felt by her that ministers at being able to mitigate his sufferings;—all these things teach us we are in a world of sin, of vicissitude, uncertainty, and change; and that it is not, it cannot be, a rest for that soul that covets and was made for the infinite and eternal.

God teaches us the very same lesson, by the success that attends our exertions. As long as we see wealth dazzling in the distance, we think if we could only reach it, how happy we should be; but as soon as we are successful in the pursuit, and possess the wealth, we find we have exaggerated its splendour. We think, when we see a rich equipage, how easy, and comfortable, and delightful it would be, if that carriage were ours! We attain it; and it feels to us, as soon as we are accustomed to its use, not one whit easier or better than the most ordinary vehicle

that we had before. In fact, we find that possession takes away one-half of the charm of that which we so thirst and long for. The brilliant promise ends in very poor performance. Have you not found, if I address any one who has been prosperous in the world, that the trouble of keeping money is almost greater than the care of earning it? God would teach us by our success what we fail to learn by our failure, that there is nothing in the world that can satisfy man's soul, and give it rest. Who has not felt it far less easy to sit on a lofty pinnacle than on a very humble and lowly seat? Is it not the experience of the most successful amongst us, that passions are quenched by indulgence—that the gilding of the world's toys wears off soon after we have used them—and that the sound of flattery, which, in the distance, was so musical, and the tones of which we were so anxious to catch, becomes hackneyed and wearisome by repetition? Neither in the height nor in the depth, neither in wealth nor in poverty, is there anything that can be a rest, and stay, and satisfaction to man's growing and unsatisfied soul.

But we learn the very same lesson by the

experience of others. Ask Ahab, and he will tell you, that, though he had a kingdom, he could not be satisfied without Naboth's vineyard. Ask Alexander, and if he could speak, he would tell you that, though he had conquered the world, he could not be satisfied unless he could be moved into another world, in order to conquer it. Ask those who have risen to the highest position of social life, and they will tell you, that they are not one whit happier than when they were in lower stations. I am inclined to think, that the man who works hard for his daily bread, and gets it, and owes no man anything, is happier than the greatest man who has inherited a splendid fortune, and does not well know how to make use of it. Ask, then, I say, Riches, if they can make you happy; and if Riches speak honestly—if Mammon will speak truth, he will tell you—"I am clay, I am thorns; I take wings and fly away; and, if I stop, you will get wings and be taken away from me." Ask renown, ask rank, ask power; and, if they speak honestly, they will tell you that the higher the elevation, the broader is the shadow. You will find the lower grade unsatisfied, ever treading on the heels of the upper;

that the servant wants always to be a master; the master, when he is made so, always to be rich; and, when rich, he wants still to be honoured by some dignified title; never satisfied; ever looking for the satisfaction which is not to be found in anything we have, or in anything we can possess. Sages have lent all their wits to discover this mysterious spring of satisfaction, and they have failed; poets have strung their lyres with their hearts' strings, if peradventure they could sing it, and they have failed; and the universal experience is—rest is an exotic: it is not an indigenous plant; it does not grow in this cold and wintry climate, or on this dry and barren sand;—it is the fruit of the tree of life. It is to be had, but in a way that I will afterwards point out,—in the earnest of it now, in its full realization hereafter.

But we have also the testimony of our own reason, that this world, with all that it contains, cannot be a rest to man. Reason alone may show you, that the transient never can minister satisfaction to the eternal. That which can last for two days only, cannot be permanent sustenance for me. That which, however good, can accompany me a little way, cannot suffice

me for all my journey. Reason itself will show you, that the material world never can come close enough into contact with the immaterial soul, and so must fail to give that soul the repose and satisfaction that it needs. In short, reason intimates, that there can be no rest till the mind is emancipated from its shadows; till the heart is dispossessed of its demoniacal passions; till the conscience is relieved from random laws, and handed over to the sway of the great Legislator, and feels within it, erected in all its sovereignty, the kingdom of right and wrong. The soul always outgrows everything that it gets. As sure as a boy will outgrow the clothes that he wears, so sure will man's soul outgrow everything that it now has. Who does not feel, if he watches his own soul, that his mind is growing? However defective my own mind may be—however weak, I am perfectly conscious that it grows. I could not preach to-day the sermons that I preached five or six years ago; I should be ashamed of too many of them. I feel growth, progress, development in mind, as well as, I trust, in heart and in grace. If any one will watch his own mind, he will see that the things that seemed very

grand a few years ago, appear very childish now; that the soul, in short, is in no respect like the body. The body, at the age of twenty-five or twenty-six, becomes stationary—has reached its growth; but the soul has no culminating point but the throne of God. The orbit of the soul vaults from the earth into the heights of the sky, and an angel's wing cannot follow it: it defies our pursuit—it sweeps far beyond our range; it is the greatest thing upon the earth except God; there is nothing higher, nothing nobler.

But not only does reason teach us that there cannot be rest for the soul here; but those foretastes that God frequently gives his people upon earth—his own people, I mean—those who are truly converted—are to us evidences that this world is not our rest. If you are Christians, there are moments when, you cannot tell why, the heart dilates and throbs, as it were, under the touch of the paternal hand of God. There are times, you know, when there is a calm, a peace, a repose that the world cannot give, and the world cannot take away. What is this? Just what the Bible calls the earnest of our inheritance—the dawn of glory. Heaven is not an

ultimate state into which man is pitched; but the maturer, brighter, fuller development of that state which has begun in the individual heart. If heaven do not begin in your heart, you have no reason to expect that you will ever be in heaven. It is a thing within us before it is a thing without us. Joy first enters into us; then, afterwards, we enter into joy. Now, these foretastes or earnests of happiness, that God gives his people here below, are evidences that this is not our rest. They are, if I may so speak, a few flowers, retaining their Eden fragrance and their primeval beauty, gathered from the paradise of God, and transmitted to his people upon earth; that, smelling that fragrance which God's breath has given them, and gazing upon those tints which God's smile has shed on them, they may long for an abundant entrance into that heavenly inheritance. The happiness that God's people feel on such occasions, consists of, if I may so speak, a few snatches of heavenly harmonies vouchsafed to mortal ear, in order that they may long for that time when they shall join in the eternal jubilee. It is a momentary glimpse of glory—the lifting of the curtain for a minute —permission to the soul to see beyond that

curtain, those hours which, like the hours upon the sun-dial, are measured by sunshine, and of which there shall never, throughout eternity, be an end. Such moments are the cluster of grapes which the children of Israel saw—earnests and pledges of the riches, the fulness, and fertility, of that promised land into which they are marching.

This world was not meant, in any sense, to be our rest. God tells us it is the nursery in which the heirs of God are trained—the gymnasium in which our moral and spiritual powers are developed—the battle-field on which, as Christ's soldiers, we fight for victory; and to take it for a rest is to mistake it altogether, for it was never meant to be so.

This world is not fit to be our rest. Everything upon it, as I have already intimated, tilts and changes. Its pleasures, like the waves of the sea, are in perpetual flux and reflux, ebbing and flowing. The tears of to-day and the smiles of to-morrow—the joy of the morning and the sorrow of the night, are its constant interchanges. What is all this? a proof that earth is not fitted for our rest. The secret of the restlessness of man's soul, and the restless-

ness of all without it, is sin. How is Satan described? "The devil goeth about." Why does he go about? Because he is restless. Why is he restless? Because sin governs, agitates, and fevers him perpetually. Now our souls are more or less tainted; the world on which we move is tainted; sin has fevered it, and filled the mind with darkness, the conscience with uneasiness, the heart with disquiet. Sin has sown the earth with thorns, sprinkled it with tears, scarred and mutilated it with graves; so much so that, to use the language of the apostle, "the earth groans and travails in pain, waiting to be delivered; as if he would represent the earth as a mother crying and weeping in her agony for her offspring, listening to the sobs of her children that she cannot help; and longing, ere she receives successive generations of the dead into her bosom, for that blessed day when there shall be the "manifestation of the sons of God," and all creation shall lay aside her ashen robes and put on her Easter garments, and the world shall end, as the world began, with Eden. This world, as it now is, then, is not fit to be our rest.

In the next place, which is no less decisive,

death tells us every moment that this world is not our rest. Death is a message to those that we have lost, but a missionary to those that remain; and that missionary preaches clearly and distinctly, ever as he breaks our circle—makes gaps in our homes—takes away those on whom we looked with sympathy—bears away those whom we would have retained in our bosoms—that this world—that happy home—that bright circle—that holy brotherhood—beautiful and blessed as they may be, are none of them the rest that awaits the people of God.

Our own personal experience teaches us this. I ask any one that reads these pages, Has not the past period of your life been upon the whole unsatisfactory? Are you not at this moment looking into the future, to find there what you have failed to find in the past? Is not all you have attained at this moment flower without fruit, golden promises, rich expectancies, but not possessions? Could you say at this moment, or any one else, the happiest man on earth, "Now let the wheel stop; let me be left where I am, nothing changed, nothing added, nothing subtracted; let the flowers around me bloom for ever; let the sky that is over me

thus shine; let all these be ever just as they now are; let me and mine be permanent and fixed just as they are?" Is there any man who would say so? Not one. There is some thorn that each wants taken out—some discord that you wish subdued—some trouble you would have mitigated—some little cloud you want swept away. Many such things are in the lot of every one; and no one I ever heard of could wish that he should be for ever just as he is at this present moment.

Is not much of our present happiness drawn from the future? Are we not happy, not because of what we are, but because of what we expect to be? Does not much of our happiness lie in the future, and very little of it indeed in the present? And yet, my dear reader, I can assure you, not from my experience, but from the Word of God, that as the past has been, as far as earthly satisfaction is concerned, the future will be too. Those blossoms that seem in the future so bright, will all fade before you reach them; those pleasures which are sparkling in the distant horizon so gloriously, you will no sooner arrive at than you will find that their sparkles have become dim, or that your taste

has altered, or that your feelings, passions, susceptibilities of pleasure, are deadened; so that, while you could enjoy them in prospect, you could not in possession. This is our own experience at this moment. Even when we have been placed in the brightest and most happy circumstances, is it not true that, just when we have met with what the world would call some good fortune, or have got into some relationship or circumstance that promised happiness, where in short the heart had no need to sigh, but every reason to bound with joy, we have been conscious, even in such circumstances, of a sort of double-self? We have felt oneself saying: "Eat, drink, and be merry; to-morrow will be as this day; there will be no cloud, but all will be bright for ever;" and we have heard a still small voice, as if from another self, telling us the brightest sun fades—the longest day closes—the sweetest flower dies—and that here there is no rest or abiding-place for any, even for the people of God.

Thus all things—instincts within, voices without, experience, reason, conscience—all say to us: "Arise, this is not your rest, sin has polluted it." Such is the experience of man;

such are the voices of the night—all in harmony with God's word, sustaining and supporting it with irresistible evidence.

If this be so—if this be not our rest—if, in our best and our most honest moments, we are forced to conclude, "It neither is, nor has been, nor is likely to be, nor is fit to be;" then what is the duty that devolves upon us? Let us pass patiently through it. The time is short. Weep over its trials as though you wept not; rejoice over its blessings as though you rejoiced not; use the world as not abusing it, for the fashion of it speedily passeth away. Above all, if it be as I have described it, not fit, not meant to be our rest, let us cease to seek for rest in it; here it is not to be found. Do not repeat the constant experiment of the world, which has been made in palaces, in halls, and in huts; by royalty, and by subjects; in every latitude and longitude; in every dispensation that God has given, and under every providence that God has sent; by all sorts of men, and in all sorts of places. The pyramids have been ransacked; Nineveh has been lifted from its ancient grave; the remains of classic art have all been brought to light; the mummies of two thousand years

have been unrolled: their mysterious hieroglyphics have been deciphered: but nowhere, in no age, by no party, has that thing rest been found—that philosopher's stone, if you like to call it so—that perfect composure from all pains, that perfect opiate for all grief—that perfect satisfaction for all restlessness. "This is not your rest; it is polluted."

What are the changes now taking place in the world? what are all the convulsions of Europe which have been so often alluded to? what are all its heaving dynasties, its still convulsed and agitated population? all this constitution-making and constitution-mending? what is this running from despotism to democracy, and from monarchy to aristocracy? what does it all mean? It is the poor patient, humanity, changing its side. When a man is ill and lies on one side, he finds he has no rest then; he changes the side, but it is only to change again. All the agitation of the continent of Europe is weary humanity, conscious of a fever it cannot quell—restless under a sin which it knows not where to get forgiveness for—changing its aching side, if peradventure it may get what is not to be had, except in that

Book which has all true and precious prescriptions—the Book of God—rest!

How great is man's soul! If you could point me a man ho had found satisfaction in this world, perfect and complete, so that he wished for nothing more, that man would give evidence that the soul is not what I have thought it to be; but is not the fact, that no man has found, and that no man can find, anything like perfect rest in this world, evidence that the soul is greater than the world?—that it was made to be satisfied with something higher, nobler, more glorious, than the world? Whatever be its true rest, it is not the world; whatever be its true happiness, it is not anything it can gather, or cull, or breathe, or drink, or clothe itself withal below. Let us learn, then, even from nature, were we without revelation, that man's soul does not die when the body dies. I know that materialists will reason and say, that as man's body grows weaker, and approaches to death, his soul seems gradually to go out too; but this is not the fact. If it were universally the case, you might say that soul and body died together. But have we not often seen that, as the outward

man has decayed inch by inch, the inward man has appeared to feed upon some hidden nutriment—to plume its wing, and rise with greater speed and glory, as if in search of a bright and enduring immortality. Men will say, as I have been reading, that when persons have been nearly dead, and have subsequently recovered, they have had no recollection, but that all has been stupor; and they have argued that, therefore, there must be cessation of life. But there are instances of an opposite kind; there are probabilities of another stamp; the way which I should illustrate the matter would be this:—Suppose there is at the bottom of a deep ditch, some thousand feet deep, a curtain, and that, as soon as it is raised, the future glory which lies beyond it is revealed. One person who has fainted a little may be said to go down into that deep ravine a hundred feet; he is drawn up again, and recollects nothing. Another, who falls into a deeper faint, may be said to descend nine hundred feet; but he recollects nothing on being drawn up again. But a third person goes to the very bottom, and has just had a corner of the curtain lifted; and he has seen sights such as Paul, who also saw it lifted,

reports were not fitted for man to utter or express—the glories of the third heaven, the splendours of Paradise revealed. I have read of persons who, under some disease or loss of blood, have been given up as dead. Some of them have said that they recollected nothing; but others have said, and I have heard dying persons also say, that they saw bright visions—that a glorious apocalypse, an unearthly splendour, seemed to come upon them, like an ocean of beauty and of glory; and they regretted that they had to come back again to the land of tears and of the shadow of death. These are facts; true, sure, and attested facts,—some of which I have collected,—that prove that other men have had a glimpse of the better world besides Paul, and have testified, on their recovery, that they had seen it. The soul, then, outlives the body; and when we lay the poor, dissolving tenement in the dust, let us remember it is not the man. Let us never forget this. We are so much the children of sense, that when we lose the well-known countenance, and the well-known form, we think "He is gone," as if there were an end of him. But it is not so; he is not dead; he has only begun to live;

he has struck his tent in the desert, and has entered into the palace not made with hands; he has laid aside the encumbrances of life, and now lives and rejoices for ever. Thus, then, we see the greatness of man's soul; it has capacities earth cannot fill; a restlessness this world cannot quell; appetencies, desires, instincts, that were made to be filled with something better, greater than the world can supply. Blessed be God, that all reason, experience, instinct, confirm what he has said in few but emphatic words, "This is not your rest."

If you are convinced of this, my dear reader, why set your heart upon the world? Why not struggle not to do so? Why not view the world as a journey? Gather a few flowers as you pass through it, and be thankful. Regard it as a wilderness. Bow down and sip a little from the brook, as it runs past, but only to strengthen you to pursue your journey. Take the world's dignities and joys. Christianity does not bid you be an ascetic; it is no leveller; it would not destroy or disorganise society; but it asks you to take all its pleasures, its joys, its dignities, as refreshments on your journey; it forbids you to stop there, to feast

and be satisfied; it enjoins you to go on with greater speed and greater energy, looking for a city that hath foundations, a better country, "an inheritance that remaineth for the people of God." Our rest is in the future; and our instinct, in looking into the future for it, is partly a Divine, partly a human one. The way to rest, and the only way, is that which was announced in Palestine: "I am the way: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." Man's soul had originally God for its inhabitant; it has lost him; and, until God return to that soul, it can never have peace. Do not then, I beseech you, reader, not separating myself from you, do not let the world overwhelm you; do not let your heart be crowded and trodden down by its traffic, its cares, and its toils. Rise above it; live above it; be in it, but not of it.

And the way, let me add, to dislodge the love of the world that now is, is to read much, think much, of the brighter world that is to be. It is a great fact, as well as law of our nature, that we can never induce a man to lay aside the preference he has, by preaching against it. If there were men that were indulging in all the pleasures and amusements of the world, I

should not think of beginning in the first instance to preach against them. I should never make a man give up the enjoyment that he has, whatever it be, until I have shown him, and made to bear upon him, a brighter enjoyment than he knows of. The only way to dislodge a bad preference is, to bring to bear upon it a good or a better preference. It is the brighter light that puts out the dim one; it is the sunbeams shining on the grate that put out the fire; it is bringing the heavenly inheritance nearer, that will make your earthly preferences grow feebler. It is just in proportion as we interest the heart in the glorious beings of an age to come, that we withdraw it from the fleeting and frail pomps and vanities of the present life.

CHAPTER IV.

A REST FOR CHRISTIANS.

"Our cradle is the starting-place
In life: we run the onward race
And reach the goal,
When, in the mansions of the blest,
Death leads to its eternal rest
The weary soul."

"There remaineth a rest for the people of God."—HEB. iv. 9.

HAVING proved, I trust to the reader's satisfaction, that there is no spot in this world, from the lowest to the very loftiest pinnacle of human greatness, on which one can repose, and there enjoy a perfect and permanent rest; it now devolves upon me to show what is the nature of that rest which is said to remain for the people of God, and who they are who are declared to have a right and title to it.

Certainly the whole course of human history seems to indicate man's ceaseless search for a

rest; to find, as it were, some quiet spot of sunshine and verdure on which he can repose, and say—"Now, here I could wish to live for ever." The point, in short, to which all the countless currents that run in the channels of social intercourse continually flow, is rest. It has been sought during five thousand years, in sunshine and in cloud, in lowness and in greatness; and it has only been found upon the earth in Christ, and realised in its fullness in eternity, at God's right hand, where there are pleasures for evermore.

This search for a rest explains all the phenomena of the world. What is the meaning of the advertisement in the newspaper—the complaint in the court of justice—the petition to parliament?—Humanity seeking for rest? What is the interpretation of the school, the academy, the college, the Royal Exchange, the market-place; what explains them all?—Man in pursuit of rest. In none of them has he found it, because this is not our rest; it *remaineth* far beyond for the people of God.

Other efforts have been made to find it. Intellect in Sir Isaac Newton swept the sky, counted the stars, weighed them, as it were, in

scales, in search for some rest for the soles of his feet; and he found but an apology for a rest, when he pronounced gravitation to be the solvent of all. Imagination in him that saw all life like a drama, or in him who soared from Paradise Lost to Paradise Regained, found no rest; for, ere long, it faltered and folded its wing, and was dissatisfied still. Illustrious captains and generals have fought hard fields, wreathed round their brows the greenest laurels, expecting they had achieved a rest for their country; but instead, they found it a respite only for a little. Great statesmen have tasked their souls, and died in the mid-time of life, worn-out and wasted by their toils; and have acknowledged that they only found a dry spot amid the waste of waters, soon again to be engulfed and covered by the all-encompassing and surrounding sea. Great nations, as only a short time ago, have risen in some dread paroxysm of restlessness, seeking to assert by force that which cannot be attained by force or secured by fraud—rest; and they have found, to their bitter experience, that they might as well have clutched the volleyed lightnings, or tried to monopolise the sun. There is no rest upon

earth: it is polluted. Every anticipation of a rest, as soon as the anticipated rest is reached, is found to be only an adjournment of the rest: at each stage a spirit meets us, and tells us—"This is not your rest." In the midst of the din and noise of the pursuit, a still small voice sounds in the depths of the deadest heart—"Why spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not?" On wealth, on fame, on science, on literature, on poor men's huts, on great men's homes, on all that man covets, toils for, strives for, aspires to, this inscription has been read, for five thousand years, and it will be read to the end, amid the tears of many a reader—"Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again"—in other words, "This is not your rest; it remaineth, it is beyond, for the people of God."

Now, the reason of this is partly in the world, and partly in the soul of the inhabitant. This world was made originally holy, beautiful, and good; but sin infected it; and the instant that sin infected the world, paralysis, ague, fever, seized upon it, and it has been convulsed and restless since. Man's soul, too, by its very

nature, explains why he cannot find rest here. Man's soul is greater than sun, and moon, and stars, and all created things; it was made for something greater than what it sees. There is nothing greater than man's soul but God himself. It is the evidence of that soul's ruin that it seeks for rest upon the earth; it is the evidence of that soul's aboriginal grandeur, and an augury of its future destiny, that nothing upon earth can fill it. It has capacities which earth cannot satisfy, yearnings and desires which stretch beyond the stars; and it gives evidence, even now, that its rest can only be found in that which is higher and greater than itself—that is, in God.

To all earnest spirits, weary, way-worn, and tired, having often sought rest and found it but restlessness,—having appealed to what they thought a fountain, and having found it but a broken cistern, these words must sound like the angel-accents at Bethlehem, or like home-music echoing from the sky—"There remaineth a rest." You shall not be disappointed for ever: your large capacities shall not be left unfilled for ever; there is a rest for you. Atheism gives you a grave; Deism points you to a blank;

Superstition to purgatorial torment; but Christianity, in its own grand tones, tells you, what none besides can tell, "There remaineth a rest for the people of God."

But while this rest remaineth for the people of God, an earnest of it is to be enjoyed here, as a pledge of its attainment hereafter. Let me first, then, show you where the earnest of it is to be enjoyed here, and in whom.

The apostle leads us, in this very epistle, to expect that some anticipation or earnest of it may be tasted here. He says, in the third verse of this chapter,—"For we which have believed do enter into rest," as a present possession; and yet he says, in the next verse,—"There *remaineth* a rest for the people of God." It is explained by this, that every man who is going to heaven has the first-fruits of heaven already. God gives him a few flowers from that glorious land, not only to cheer him in his pilgrimage, but to be a pledge that he shall ultimately be admitted into its full enjoyment. To show and prove that we shall find the lasting and the immutable rest, he gives us now a partial and anticipatory rest. He gives it in those blessed words which we have often read,

but the full meaning of which we never can exhaust—"Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest." John could say,—"Behold the Lamb!" Peter could say,—"To whom can we go but unto thee?" Apostles, and evangelists, and ministers can say,—"Go to Jesus;" but Jesus could stand, with no beauty upon him that men should desire him, and say, with all the softness of human sympathy, but with all the grandeur of a present Deity,—"*Come* unto ME, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

Let me, then, notice this anticipatory rest, this earnest of rest, and how we are to find it. The future rest is for the people of God—"There remaineth a rest for the people of God." The present is "rest" in trouble; the future is "rest" from trouble. The present rest, the rest that you are invited to seek, is for every one who is "weary and heavy laden." Jesus assigns no qualification, no requisite, except this—that you are consciously weary and heavy laden, and that you want rest. Do I address, then, any exhausted with the toils of the week, blighted in his hopes, disappointed in

heart, whose thoughts of the future are forebodings, whose reminiscences of the past are sorrow; who has applied to many a fountain, and has found it but a cistern: who has thought that he had a rest, and has found it was not?—my brethren, without anything to do or to feel first, or to repent first, we are called upon, just because we are weary and heavy laden, and for no other reason, to come, just as we are, to Jesus, and find instant rest. The invitation is, "Come"—the word used throughout the Bible to denote simply—"believe," "exercise trust," or "confidence." Just as the manslayer, when he ran from the avenger of blood, rushed into the "city of refuge," and there had rest,—just as the wounded Israelite looked at the serpent of brass, and, by a Divine ordinance, had instant health; so you are called upon to flee to Jesus upon the wings of affection, to lean upon Jesus with the *hand* of the heart, to look to Jesus with the eye of the soul, and to be assured that, as truly as you thus lean, and look, and flee, that God's mercy will descend upon you, to forgive you, and God's Spirit will plant in your heart that sweet sense of repose which is the earnest of the "rest that remaineth for the people of

God." Jesus says,—"Come unto *me*, all ye that are weary and heavy laden." You are not to stop in your flight at anything between you and the Lord Jesus Christ. He does not say, —"Come to the church." The church is useful as a witness to Christ; but the instant that the church places herself in the room of Christ, that instant she will be cast out as "salt that has lost its savour." Nor does he say—"Come to the Sacraments." Precious they are, each in its place; but these are not gods; they cannot save us; they are only means by which we can apprehend Jesus more clearly,—lenses through which we can see further off "the King in his beauty," and the blessings that he offers us. Nor are we to come to the minister. The minister is a witness, like the church, to Jesus: "whom we preach," is his function; but the instant that he directs the notice of the people to his own pretensions, and withholds or diverts it from his Master's glory,—the instant he speaks of what he is, whilst he is dumb upon what his Master is,—the instant he makes his own succession, or his own discipline, or his own form, to be everything, and the claims of Jesus something by the by, his right hand will

be withered,—his tongue will cleave to the roof of his mouth; and he will realise the awful fact, that he that tries to steal a ray from the glory of God takes a curse into his own bosom. Jesus says, then,—"Come unto me." No priest, or presbyter, or synod, or general assembly, or archbishop, or pope, or prelate, has any right to stand between the greatest sinner and instant peace through the blood of Jesus Christ.

We have read in our school-days of the incident related of Diogenes the Cynic and Alexander the Great. It is said that the Macedonian monarch one day saw the Cynic basking in the sunshine, in his tub. That great monarch was so charmed with his quiet serenity that, envying the peace which the philosopher had, which was a stranger to the prince's bosom, he substantially said to him:—"Diogenes, I am so delighted with you, that you need only ask and I will give you anything, to the half of my kingdom." The Cynic philosopher replied: "Please your Majesty, I have only one favour to ask; that is, that you will stand aside from between me and the sun, in whose beams I am now enjoying myself." Were a hierarch that surrounds the throne, were a saint or angel, or

the Virgin Mary, to come down to me, and ask me the greatest favour they could do me, I would not ask them either to plead for me, or to pray for me; all I would beg of them would be, to stand aside from between me and the beams of that Sun under whose wings there is shelter, and in whose light there are life, and happiness, and perpetual rest." Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest"—the earnest of a rest that will be.

The rest that we find in Jesus, will be found to be a complete rest to all that is now restless and dissatisfied within us. Reason in its pursuit, imagination in its flight, the heart in its throbbings, conscience in its disquiet, will each and all find rest in the knowledge of Jesus. The conscience will find blood that can pacify it; the reason will find God "just, while he justifies the ungodly;" and the heart will find love generated within it, as responsive to that love which God has shown to it. In Christ we find rest under the conviction of sin. What makes our days so often wretched and our nights restless? The main thing—not indeed the only thing—is sin in the conscience. As sure as Jonah in the

ship created the storm in the elements around it, so sure sin, indulged in, unexpiated, unforgiven, will create a quarrel between the conscience and the heart, which will increase disquiet and uneasiness within. In such a state, then, what can give us rest?—to know this—"The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin." Glorious truth!—"He that knew no sin, was made sin for me, that I might be made the righteousness of God by him; and "justified by faith, we have peace with God through Jesus Christ." If, then, I address one who has recollections of sins that grieve, the past period of whose life is felt more than sufficient to condemn, —reader, just as you are, without previous preparation, cast your soul upon the sacrifice of Jesus; seek the forgiveness of that sin in the efficacy of that blood; and the deep sense of gratitude you will feel for so transcendant a mercy, will make you love God with your whole heart, and go out and serve God with your whole life.

But we have not only rest in Jesus, under the sense of sin, but we have also rest in him under the experience of sorrow. Some one has said that man was made to mourn. Originally

he was made to be happy; God never made man to be sad; sin, and the results of sin, have so made him; it is as primary a design of Christianity to make man happy as to make man holy. If we have no happiness, it is not because there is not plenty in the Gospel, but because we do not open our hearts honestly to receive it. If, then, we are in sorrow, we shall find rest in Christ. Sorrow is the heir-loom of humanity: since sin entered, and death by sin, its melancholy tale is found in the chronicles of every land; its experience is familiar to every heart. Affinities we deemed perpetual are dissolved; the desire of our eyes is swept away; fair faces that smiled on us, and whose smiles we reciprocated, are borne to the "rest that remaineth for the people of God;" and we have felt and found a chasm that all the world's magnificence, riches, sympathies, consolations, never, never can fill. A Christian, in such circumstances, feels rest in Jesus; he hears his voice—"It is I, be not afraid." He recollects the beautiful prescription—"Is any man afflicted, let him pray: is any man merry? let him sing psalms." And thus he regards his afflictions as sent; he prays, and is quieted: he regards his joys as

given; he praises, and is satisfied still; and in both circumstances he has rest.

In all outward dispensations, too, the Christian feels and finds rest. Does he lose his property? his health? his children? he knows there is no *chance* in any of these occurrences. Chance is a word for an atheist's vocabulary; it is not a word found in a Christian's Bible. In the sparrow that falls, weary in its flight, and in the angel that sings before the throne —in the leaf swept from the tree in autumn, and in the crushing of a dynasty, or the explosion of a throne—in all that is elegantly little, and in all that is magnificently great—in the great roaring torrent of public life, and in the little eddies and streamlets of private and individual experience, God is guiding all, controlling all, conveying happiness to them that are his, and working out glory to his name as the ultimate and blessed issue. The Christian, therefore, has peace.

Have we any experience of this peace? There are but two sorts of peace: there is the world's peace, which is an opiate that stills the conscience for a season—peace, peace, but no peace; and there is the Christian's peace—the

peace that passeth understanding. You who have light in your heads, but no grace in your hearts, who feel life too little to satisfy you, death too awful to be ventured on—you that dare not give yourselves wholly to the world, and will not give yourselves wholly to God—who will not renounce your sins because your passions forbid you, and dare not renounce religion because your conscience instantly checks you—who dread scepticism lest it should fail you, and living religion lest it should disappoint you—you are the most unhappy men of all; you have neither the world's rest, which is the opiate for a season, nor the rest of the Christian the peace that passeth understanding. You have feelings that you can neither stifle nor satisfy; and you are, therefore, of all men the most wretched. Leave the broken cistern; come to the fountain. Make the experiment of being decided, thorough, right-hearted Christians. There is no consistent medium, no resting-place, between the freezing atheism which says, "No God," and the evangelical, vital, active Christianity which teaches us that God is our Father, and heaven our home, and all men brethren, and life a pilgrimage to happiness and glory.

I have thus, then, spoken of the earnest of the rest that remains for the people of God. I need not repeat that nothing else but Jesus—no one thing but faith, and confidence, and close communion and walk with him, can possibly give us that rest which is the thirst of all humanity, but the attainment only of the people of God. That spirit that spans the universe cannot be satisfied with a grain of sand. The eye that descends to the depths, the soaring thought that stretches beyond the stars, never, never can be at rest until it finds its centre and its resting-place in the bosom of God.

But this is the earnest of a rest: the true rest remains, we are told, for the people of God. The rest that a Christian now has is a rest *in* trouble; the rest that a Christian will have is a rest *from* trouble. It is the same as that spoken of in the Revelation, where it says:—I heard a voice from heaven, saying, Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord; yea, saith the Spirit, from henceforth, for they *rest* from their labours." How beautiful is that text! They die *in* the Lord—that is their safety—as the branch is in the vine. We can never

say a servant is in his master; that would be absurd. Then this strange phrase, "in Christ," must mean something more than being followers of Christ: it means being united to him—resting upon him—deriving life from him, forgiveness, sanctification, happiness from him. Then "Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord," as their state of safety, their blessedness, being that they "rest from their labours." The trail of light and beauty that follows them is reflected from their works. They are represented as following the Lamb, and their works following them. It is not said that their works precede, and that they follow—this would mean that their works would be a title to heaven; but it says that Christ precedes—the Christian follows, and the works follow the Christian. Job also alludes to this rest when he says, "There the weary are at rest." The apostle also explains it when he says, "You who are troubled rest with us."

And yet this rest is not insensibility. Man's soul never sinks into torpor. It is an awful delusion that the soul at death becomes insensible till the resurrection. I believe even natural religion would teach us that man's soul, when

severed from the body, so far from becoming insensible, is only emancipated from its prison, to unfold a broader pinion, and soar with a more majestic flight, until it basks in the beatific vision, and sings beside the throne of the Most High. Thus, when we are mourning over the beloved dead—some father, or mother, or sister, or brother, or husband, or wife—and gazing upon the cold face on which the last smile of life still lingers—and weeping, as though this were our relative; that soul emancipated, if permitted by God's great laws to speak to us, would say:—"Weep not for me, but weep for yourselves. I have laid aside, not life, but the shackles of life; I have not left happiness, but entered upon it; I am not dead, I have only begun to live. Come up hither! Come speedily, and share with me those joys that shall never be suspended—that rest that shall never be broken."

This rest, then, which remaineth for the people of God, I would notice, in the first place, will be rest from all bodily pain. "The inhabitant shall not say, I am sick." Sickness and death are perfectly unnatural things; and I am not surprised that men shrink from death

—that most unnatural catastrophe. Man was made to live; and it is sin, the foul blot that has fallen upon the earth, and generated disease and decay, that renders death now necessary at all. This death to the worldling—that is, to the man who has no religion, must be a terrific thing. I wonder how any man can have twelve hours' quiet who has not some clear, or rather conclusive evidence that he is going to the "rest that remaineth for the people of God." I wonder, on the other hand, how any man can have ten minutes' unhappiness who knows that God is his Father; that that blessed Saviour has gone to prepare a home for him; and that, as sure as he dies, whether death shall be sudden, or the result of protracted disease, instant death shall be instant glory, and, in any shape, the vestibule of happiness for ever. The rest, then, that "remaineth for the people of God" will be free from all pain and from all sickness. Then the mind will be able to pursue its excursions; then it will enjoy powers adequate to the analysis of all that is submitted to it: it will not have to complain of the aching head, nor to resign its toils because of the fainting heart; but freed from the fetters and

restrictions of mortality, it will put forth a vigour and a power of which we have now but a dim conception—a vigour and a power of which it has given occasional intimations in its grand discoveries; but beside which, when it takes its place in heaven, the most brilliant discoveries of human genius will appear like children's playthings, that perish in the using.

In that rest, too, the soul will be free from all mental anxiety and grief. Here, it is the experience of every Christian, that there are fears within and fightings without. How often do we weep because our plans have miscarried! and how often do we fear that our future plans will miscarry also! How often do we lament the deceptions practised upon us in trade! How much do we fear and suspect those with whom we have intercourse in the market or in the exchange, from the necessities of human nature, and the weaknesses of human character! But when that day comes—when that bright rest dawns, no want will tempt us to do wrongly, no passion will drive us to do rashly. All passion, in as far as it is evil, shall be purged; all wants shall be abundantly satisfied; there

shall be no aching void; we shall admit that we are, as David said he would be, "satisfied when I awake with thy likeness."

In that blessed rest we shall be free from all the disputes and the controversies that agitate the world and society at large. All disputes will be settled on the confines of heaven; all controversies that have convulsed the world will be forbidden there. We shall then see, as the apostle tells us, eye to eye. Providence, with its ups and downs, will be luminous; all mysteries will be unravelled—all hieroglyphs explained—all discords resolved in harmony. There shall be no war, nor battle, nor conflict, nor sound of clarion, nor "garments rolled in blood;" because holiness shall beat in man's heart, and happiness shall be breathed in man's life for ever.

In that rest, when it comes, too, there will be no loss by death. Here our circles upon earth become fewer, and those that we love are constantly removed; but in that better land, not only will there be no death, but those that were severed from us by death below will be re-united and joined to us in happiness above. The broken circles of families will be com-

pleted; those that we loved and parted with in agony, shall rejoin us; the doors that shut us in, shall shut all sorrow out; the loveliest blessing will be the longest; all space shall be full of light; our praise will be a perpetual hymn; and our hearts ever bounding, and never breaking.

And this rest, let me add, at some of the features of which I have glanced, is to be an eternal rest: "There remaineth a rest for the people of God:"—it is for ever; it fadeth not away. No frost shall nip its flowers, no cloud darken its sky; the rest shall never be disturbed for ever and ever.

This rest of which I am speaking is coming nearer and nearer to us every hour. Every day that closes, takes from the length of life and from the lustre of things that are seen. The tide seems already to approach our feet; the first waves of that eternal sea rise and swell upon the sand on which we now stand. Very soon what we call life—that little isthmus between time and eternity—shall be covered by the vast unsounded ocean into which all of us must speedily enter. Every day that we live, that eternity is coming nearer; every pulse of

our heart is a warning that it is so. Let me ask you, reader, Are you ready for it? Are you thirsting for it? Do you long for it? Do you enjoy everything that tells you of it? and feel that you are happier because you hear that "there remaineth a rest for the people of God?"

This leads me, in the last place, to notice for whom this rest is designed. I said the rest *in* trouble "is for the weary and heavy laden;" the rest *from* trouble is here pronounced to be for "the people of God." Who are they? They have been branded by many names, but they are still the same; they have been often caricatured, but they are still the people of God. They will not be so many as the Universalist alleges, nor so few as the exclusive Antinomian alleges. If I rightly estimate their character, they are not distinguished by an outer robe, nor yet by the pronunciation of a popular Shibboleth. Many of them worship in chapels, many in churches, some in cathedrals. Some pray without a liturgy, some pray with one; some praise with an instrument, some praise without one; but all with the heart. Of these, some are Churchmen, and some are

Dissenters, and some are even in the bosom of the Church of Rome—not *of* it, yet *in* it. Whatever be the names by which they are distinguished on earth, they are known in the catalogues of glory only by one—the living people of the Living God. It is only when a little of the light of that upper world falls upon the petty disputes of this present world, that we see how all that man calls great is crowded into a very little bulk; whilst the least that God pronounces true, assumes a size, an importance, and a magnificence that awe and astonish us. It is thus that God's people are in all systems, in all sects and parties; and yet they have characteristics by which they are clearly and distinctly known. I do not undervalue sections of the Church. Perhaps it is God's ordinance that our ecclesiastical being should be kept pure by antagonism and disputes; and one can see, that the distinction into the varied sects that have existed from the beginning, has been overruled to do great good. The Jews had the charge of the Old Testament: if the Jew tried to touch it, the Samaritan would have instantly corrected him; if the Pharisee had tried to alter a verse, the Sadducee would

have instantly pounced upon him, and exposed him; if either had tried to alter, another sect would have noticed and proclaimed it. So in the history of the Church. If the Churchman should put in something that was not in the Bible originally, to prove his form, the Dissenter would instantly note it; and if the Dissenter were to interpolate something that would tend in his direction, the Churchman would instantly expose him. If the Baptists were to put in a word, showing that adults only were to be baptised, the Pædobaptist would correct him; and if the Pædobaptist were to insert anything in favour of his argument, the Antipædobaptist would correct him. Thus, those divisions which are the evidence of the weakness of man, are overruled by the wisdom and goodness of God, to keep our Christianity alive, and our Bibles pure and uncorrupted, even to the end. Let us hate sectarianism; let us pray for and love all that love the Lord Jesus Christ. Each church may be likened to a tree; each tree growz in its own congenial and native clime: its roots grow best in its own soil, but all the branches of all the trees wave in the unsectarian air; the fruits of all ripen in the beams of one catholic

sun; and the fibres of all are connected with the fibres of the tree of life by roots running underground, invisible to us, but real and lasting, the planting of the Lord.

But while it is thus true that God's people are found in all denominations, it is no less true that these people for whom the rest is provided, have clear, and sharp, and definite characteristics. However beautiful the rest may be, I beseech you, my readers, to think less of the rest, with its coming beauty; and think each for a moment more intently—"Have I the characteristics of those for whom that rest is being made ready?"

First, then, the people of God have this grand characteristic in common—that they receive and cleave to the Bible in its integrity and purity, as the only rule of faith. In religious matters, the Bible, without a clasp—nay, without a comment—is their only and conclusive directory; so that these people of God care very little what is man's opinion of the Bible, but care very much what is the Bible's opinion of man. Their creed, in short, is, not what the best men say, nor what the most men say, but it is simply what God has

said; and they accept as truth, not that which has majorities behind it, or splendour, pomp, and grandeur embosoming it, but that which has prefixed to it, "Thus saith the Lord." Here is the very first stage in our Christianity: we must accept this book, on evidence that is satisfactory to us, as from God; and ever as this book speaks, we must see an end to all discussion; whatever it says plainly, clearly, and unequivocally, it is our highest duty, our purest happiness, heartily to receive, embrace, and act upon.

The second feature of the people of God is, that they take as their title to the "rest that remaineth for the people of God," the righteousness and the sacrifice of Christ alone: they may be the most moral, the most upright, the most excellent, the most virtuous; but yet, if they are the people of God, their language is this:—"There is none other name given among men whereby we can be saved, but the name of Jesus." Hence, a Christian does not look to anything he has suffered, as an expiation for his sin, or to anything he has done, as a title to happiness; he puts his good deeds and his bad deeds at the foot of the cross; he begs forgive-

ness, through the blood of Jesus, for both; and resting upon the finished righteousness and perfect sacrifice of the Lamb of God, justified by faith, he has peace with God. This beautiful text is the epitome of his title, "He that knew no sin was made sin for me." How was Christ made sin for me? By my sin being imputed to Him. Well, just in the same manner, says the apostle, "that I might be made the righteousness of God by Him." How am I made the righteousness of God by him? By his righteousness being imputed to me. So that Christ was the spotless lamb in the tainted fleece of my transgressions: and I am the tainted, but forgiven sheep, in the glorious fleece of the Redeemer's righteousness. And as it was just in God that Jesus should suffer because of my sins lying upon Him, God is only faithful and just to acquit me because of Jesus' righteousness lying upon me. There is my foundation; there is my trust—that which Paul proclaimed, that which Martin Luther excavated from the rubbish in which it was buried, that which shines from every page of the Bible, and ought to sound in every sermon—free, instant, glorious forgiveness by faith alone, through

the precious sacrifice of Jesus, for which the Church is built, for which a ministry is continued, and the renunciation of which is the renunciation of its essential and noblest offices and functions.

In the next place, the people of God have not only this title to the rest, but they have a *fitness* for it. Now, what is this fitness? It is the work of the Holy Spirit within them. Are you aware that it needs, not only Christ's finished work without you to be your title to heaven, but it needs also the Spirit's progressive work within you to be your fitness for heaven? It is as necessary that I should be made fit for this rest, as it is that I should be entitled to it. Now, what will make me fit? Baptism may cleanse the flesh: it cannot regenerate the heart. Baptism, precious in its place, as an admission into the outward and the visible Church, has no magic power, no exorcising virtue to alter, transform, and renew the heart that is dead in sin. It needs the same omnipotent power that opened the grave of Jesus, to open my heart, and make it live again. "Except a man"—it does not matter who he is, rich or poor, high or low—"be born again of the Spirit

of God, he cannot see the kingdom of God;" and unless that change take place in us now, we shall never know what rest is in Jesus, nor enter into rest hereafter.

But I may notice that there is one word here which conveys an idea of the character of those who enter into this rest; it is in the word translated "rest." It is said that there remaineth a Σαββατισμὸς for the people of God; literally translated, "a Sabbath-keeping," as if there were something so holy, beautiful, and sweet in the earthly Sabbath, that a Christian, by the enjoyment of his Sabbaths upon earth, anticipates and covets as his dearest joy an everlasting Sabbath, when time shall be no more. And it is very much by what you feel of pleasure in the Sabbath now, that you may estimate your fitness for the everlasting Sabbath. The man to whom the Sabbaths upon earth have no beauty, to whose ear the chimes of Sabbath-bells have no music, and to whose heart the exercises of the Sabbath sanctuary come home with no stirring eloquence and influential force, gives but poor evidence that he is ripening for that everlasting "Sabbath-keeping" that remaineth for the people of God. The Sabbath

upon earth is a fragment of heaven, set like a gem in the brow of this world: it is, as it were, an island struck off from the continent of eternity, cast down into the roaring torrents of human life, standing upon which we can see the sunshine of the better land, hear the chimes of its jubilee, and, by our experience of the sweetness of our Sabbath here, rejoice that there will one day be a Sabbath which shall never be disturbed by the sound of the railway-whistle, or darkened by the cloud of the manufactory smoke, or disturbed by our sins, or clouded by our prejudices, or interrupted by our infirmities; where necessity and mercy, which are now just pleas upon earth, shall be no pleas, because not needed at all, for ever.

Reader, do you enjoy the Sabbath—not as a penance, but as a festival, after the weary week is done? Are you thankful for the Sabbath light? Is it to you the brightest day of the seven, the day that you most enjoy, which you would not give up for all the days of all the week besides?

Lastly, the people of God love and follow the Lord Jesus Christ. "These are they that

follow the Lamb:" "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me."

Such, then, are some of the characteristics of the people of God. They are found in all quarters of the globe: they are found on the frozen ledges of Greenland, and in the regions of perpetual snow; in pathless deserts, and under the torrid zone; in palaces, in halls, in huts, in hovels; in all denominations, in all ranks and degrees of life: having these characteristics—that while they live everywhere, wherever they live, they are either the lights that visibly illuminate the world, or the salt that silently, but persistently, leavens it. And many, as I have said, are in the number of the people of God whom we, in our uncharitableness, are apt to exclude. Many a poor tonsured monk, who superstitiously carried the crucifix in his hand, may, notwithstanding, by some ray of the better light penetrating his heart, lean upon the true crucifix, Christ, and Him crucified; and meet us, a fellow possessor of the "rest that remaineth for the people of God." Some poor Jew, who, in his ignorance and his sin, rejected the Messiah, as described by John the Evangelist, may

be trusting in the Messiah as described by Isaiah the prophet—the same Saviour differently described; and such we may meet, "an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile;" who has "washed his robes, and made them white, in the blood of the Lamb," and therefore is "before the throne, and serves him day and night."

To you who know the characteristics of the people of God, I issue the invitation. Join this holy fellowship; decide for Christ; think of that solemn calculation, "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" Study the answer to this great question, "What must I do to be saved?" The real and vital question is, not the sect you belong to, the form you worship in, but the life you live, the trust you exercise, the righteousness you are clothed with, the regeneration of heart which you have or have not. If you are one of the people of God, all things are bearing you to this blessed rest. Power crumbles in possession; wealth consumes; fame is but a breath; riches take wings, and flee away. These things but feed the passions, or perfume the

senses, or beautify the grave; but holiness is happiness, and both remain for ever and ever. Every star that comes forth upon the brow of night seems to say to you, "Come up hither." Voices additional to this, borne down in the stillness of the night—the voices of the glorious company of the Apostles, the noble army of Martyrs, the goodly fellowship of Prophets, bid you "Come up hither." And when the noise of the world is hushed, and all the glare of the world is darkened, and you are silent, and still, and alone, do there not seem, sometimes, sounding like sweet music in the very depths of your heart, the voices of near and dear ones with whom you parted years ago, saying, "We are happy: hasten to this rest; look to that blessed Saviour; make ready for the coming welcome; come up thither; be happy with us for ever!" Above all, that voice, not the least musical and precious also, the voice of Jesus, unspent by distance, unexhausted by years, sounds along the centuries of time, and finds an echo in my voice, and in your hearts, this day: "Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Oh, God grant that

from the silent depths of a thousand hearts this blessed answer may be given: "Son of God, we come, we come: Son of God, to whom can we go but unto thee? Thou hast the words of Eternal Life."

CHAPTER V.

NATURE'S TRAVAIL AND EXPECTANCY.

Earth
Uplifts a general cry for guilt and wrong,
And Heaven is listening. The forgotten graves
Of the heart-broken utter forth their plaint.

From battle-fields,
Where heroes madly drove and dashed their hosts
Against each other, rises up a noise,
As if the armed multitudes of dead
Stirred in their heavy slumber.

Mournful tones
Come from the green abysses of the sea,
A story of the crimes the guilty sought
To hide beneath its waves.
What then shall cleanse thy bosom, gentle earth,
From all its painful memories of guilt—

That so at last,
The horrid tale of perjury and strife,
Murder and spoil, which men call history,
May seem a fable, like the inventions told
By poets of the gods of Greece?

"For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.—Rom. viii. 19—22.

Our sufferings are not peculiar to ourselves: they are co-incident with the sufferings of all

created things, that is, all fallen nature; and thus the glory which is to be revealed shall not be monopolised by us, but shared by the vast creation under and around us.

This passage is extremely beautiful; rich in imagery, glorious in hope, and very much fitted, I think, to sustain, delight, and comfort us. I must, however, state, by way of preliminary remark, that a great deal of controversy has arisen about the meaning of the word translated here "creature." The word translated "creature" is κτίσις. It occurs nineteen times in the New Testament, and out of these nineteen times, about fourteen times it must mean simply the created universe, the dumb brute, the material earth, stones, wood, flower, fruit, and sea. Such a meaning is evidently intended in such a passage as this, for instance, "From the beginning of the creation." (Mark x. 6.) Nobody can deny, that in the last text here the inanimate creation is meant. But in this very chapter the word occurs in this sense; and if we find in this chapter the word but once, undeniably referring to the inanimate creation or the material world, it does seem but fair to suppose that the Apostle uses the word throughout in the same ascertained

sense. At the close of the chapter it is written: "Nor height, nor depth, nor *any other creature:*" here, I humbly think, it cannot mean men. "I am persuaded that neither *death,* nor *life,* nor *angels,* nor *principalities* [evidently spiritual wickedness in high places], nor powers, nor things present [*things,* neuter], nor things to come [neuter still], Nor height [not a rational being, nor depth nor any other *creature* [κτίσις], shall be able to separate us from the love of God." And, therefore, I should say throughout this chapter the word must be used as descriptive of creation, and not of God's rational offspring. I state this, because two interpretations are given of this passage. The one opinion, entertained by eminent men, and good men, far abler scholars than I am, is that it means the whole unconverted part of the human family, as contrasted with the Sons of God; that is, that the whole of the unconverted, Gentile, and Jew, and Heathen, groan and travail, waiting for the adoption, that is, the redemption of the body, and looking for the manifestation of the sons of God.

The other opinion is, that the word here rendered "creation" means the earth, the sea,

the birds, the fishes, the dumb brutes, and all things animate and inanimate, that God himself has created, except man, who is contradistinguished in this chapter.

Moses Stuart, an eminent American divine, holds that the first opinion is the right one, and that the passage should read thus: "For the earnest expectation of all mankind, unconverted mankind, waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God; for human nature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of God, who subjected the same human nature in hope; because human nature itself—unconverted and unsanctified human nature—shall be delivered from the bondage of that corruption under which it now labours, into the glorious liberty of us Christians who are the children of God; for we know that all mankind groan and travail in pain together until now; and not only they, but ourselves also which have the first-fruits of the Spirit. This is substantially the interpretation given by Moses Stuart.

The second opinion is held by Martin Luther, Tholuck, Hodge, and other modern writers, and by Chrysostom, Jerome, Theodoret, and almost

all the ancient fathers, with scarcely a single exception. Thus, therefore, the latter opinion has names of great merit attached to it. The paraphrase of the passage, according to the opinion held by these latter, would be, "For the earnest expectation," literally meaning, the stretching out of the neck, as of one gazing with strained vision into the future, looking for something he is anxiously wishing to arrive. "For the earnest expectation of heaven, and earth, and air, and sea, and all dumb, animate, and inanimate nature, as wide as the region that the curse has covered, waiteth for the manifestation of Christians," who are now hidden, as I shall show afterwards. For creation was made subject to vanity not willingly, not by any sin of its own, but by reason of Him who pronounced the curse upon it that it should bring forth thorns, but has laid it under the forelights of hope, that it shall one day blossom as the rose; for even this very suffering nature shall shine and glow in the glorious liberty of the children of God, but at present the created earth, animate and inanimate, "groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And *not only* they, but ourselves also."

Now let me show the objections to the first opinion, and what seem to be clear evidences of the truth of the second. The great use of a minister of the gospel is to interpret God's word; and whatever God has written for our instruction, it is our duty, our dignity, our privilege, to try and find out the true meaning of. Ministers of Christianity are not warranted in invariably selecting passages of Scripture which are plain, and just because they are so, however precious they may be: they must take the whole testimony of God: we are sanctified through the truth, through all the truth. It, therefore, becomes the minister of the Gospel to bring forth things both new and old. Independently of this, I attach to the passage very great interest; it seems to me vocal with strains of the richest music—it reflects on my heart the brightest and the holiest hopes from afar. My objection to the first reading, that the creature here means the rational offspring of God or mankind, is this: Can it be said of unconverted men, Jew or Gentile, that they wait with an earnest desire for the manifestation of the sons of God? Do infidels, sceptics, atheists believe in any such possibility as the manifesta-

tion of the sons of God? Do they admit any such article into their shrivelled creed? Do they believe the text which predicts that they will thus be made manifest? Do they indulge in any happy hope that they will thus, and then, be made manifest themselves, and so be eventually happy? Can it be said, looking at mankind who are not interested in the Gospel, who are unacquainted with its blessed truths, that in any sense they are earnestly "stretching out their heads," and looking for the advent of a spiritual bliss, as the fulfilment of a prediction which will be to them an introduction to the liberty and joy of the sons of God? Can it be said, with any degree of propriety, that the unconverted world is subject to sin *not willingly?* Is it not, on the contrary, continually said in Scripture that they "choose not to retain God in their knowledge," that they are "wilfully ignorant," that they "will not come to Christ," that they are of their own will, and love, and purpose, alienated from God, that sin is their delight, that corruption is their element, and that they do not wish or expect that it ever will be better? If we converse with men of the modern pantheistic school, they will tell us that

nature is now in a state of optimism—that is, that everything now is in the best possible state. What is this? what but glorifying in things as sin has made them, and having no hope of an event which is here predicted, that nature shall be emancipated into the glorious liberty of the children of God? It has been argued, that all men look for the manifestation of sons of God, just as Christ may be said to be "the Desire of all nations." But the text of Haggai merely shows that there is a desire in the heart of every man, an aching want which Christ alone can meet and satisfy: but it is not necessarily taught that all nations do actually desire Christ; for another prophet says, "There is no beauty in him that men should desire him." It is one thing to say there is a desire in the human heart which the advent of Christ alone can satisfy and quiet; another to say that all men look for an event which does not satisfy any desire they feel, and which, therefore, they must believe in, if they expect it: for a manifestation of the sons of God will satisfy no worldly desire whatever. To a Christian alone it can be an object of hope; to creation the arrival of a coming event on the advent

of which it will rejoice. In the next place, let me ask, Can it be said with any degree of propriety, that the whole of unconverted mankind shall be introduced into the glorious liberty of the sons of God? If this were said without any explanation at all, it would imply that the whole of mankind will be saved, and universalism would be true: but this is denied by those good men to whom I have alluded, and who take an opposite view from me; for they say only the last generation of mankind shall be introduced into the glorious liberty of the sons of God; just as we say that only of the brutes then living shall it be true, that "The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid." But according to the notion of those who hold this opinion, the millennium is not to be a state of *perfect* happiness; but only a *high degree* of holiness and happiness, brought on by the ordinary preaching of the Gospel, and other instrumentalities employed by us—that the tares then shall only be few, and the wheat many; and, therefore, according to their own theory, at no period on earth or in time will it be true that every unconverted man shall be converted and ad-

mitted into the glorious liberty of the sons of God.

On these grounds this last opinion seems to me untenable. The Scriptures say that the tares and the wheat—that is, professors and the sons of God—shall be mixed together till the Lord of the harvest come himself, and separate the one from the other; that therefore this present dispensation will end in no other till the Lord come.

It has been said, that it is very absurd to suppose that stones, and wood, and trees, and all dumb animals are groaning and longing for this introduction to glorious liberty. I answer, however absurd it may seem, it is in perfect harmony with the rest of Scripture; for does not the Bible constantly speak of creation as sentient? does it not say that the hills clap their hands? do we not read, the valleys shall sing and shout for joy? is it not said, "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork?" Thus we see that by what is called a *prosopopœia*, a peculiar allegory, all nature is represented throughout the Bible as sentient; and therefore the Apostle Paul, in perfect harmony with this

figure, represents all creation as now groaning and travailing, about to bring forth a new world, "new heavens, and a new earth," when the old world and the old heavens shall be no more mentioned at all. In the next place, is not this suffering of creation round us perfectly accordant with what most men have thought to be the whole analogy of Scripture? Is it not expressly taught, that creation suffered when man sinned? Is it not true that when the curse was pronounced on man, a corresponding curse was pronounced upon the earth: "Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee?" That man should fertilise the earth by the sweat of his brow, and water it by the tears of his weeping eyes, is the very earliest evidence of a curse denounced upon it. If, then, it be true that all creation has sympathised in its measure according to its nature, with man's sin and fall—and the Scriptures, I think, clearly teach so—does it not seem very reasonable and very natural, for us to expect all creation shall sympathise with man's recovery? But however reasonable, if it were not Scriptural, I would reject it; but Scripture frequently and fully asserts that when man shall be restored and reinstated in his re-

covered royalty, "the wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them," and "the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose;" in short, that all creatures, subject to man at first, shall be restored to that harmony, and replaced in those peaceful relationships, which they lost in consequence of man's sin. The Apostle Peter tells us in his Second Epistle: "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat; the earth also, and the works that are therein, shall be burned up;" not burned out of existence, not annihilated—but in the same sense in which the phrase "the whole earth *perished* by the flood;" that is, underwent a mighty change. Seeing, then, that all these things shall be dissolved [the word dissolved is applied in the Acts to the wreck of the ship in which St. Paul sailed separating into pieces, but it by no means implies the annihilation of the ship], what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fer-

vent heat? Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for "new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." Then shall be the introduction of nature into the glorious liberty of the sons of God. Man sinned, and instantly nature suffered. Man lost his innocency, and creation instantly lost its beauty. Is it not in perfect accordance with all Scripture to infer that when man, who is the flower and the prince of creation, its head, its lord, and priest, shall be restored and reinstated in his primal beauty—in more than his primal glory—that this earth, which sin smote, which his wickedness has marred, dismantled, and injured, shall also be restored, reinstated, and made beautiful, as man himself—the house and the inhabitant rebuilt and restored together? Does not this seem to be the more Scriptural, and not only so, but also the more probable and more reasonable, view? Nay, do not the two seem to run perfectly parallel? For instance, man sins; the result is, that a curse is pronounced upon him, and then a curse is pronounced upon nature. What is that primal curse? All cattle are cursed: and the serpent above all cattle is cursed, "Cursed is the ground

for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground." Man's primal innocence was surrounded by nature in her primal peace, happiness, and beauty; but man sins, and in consequence of his sin he drags down nature into the lower climate of thistles, disquiet, rebellion. We find the fall of creation parallel with the fall of man. We may hope, nay, we are taught in the Bible to hope, that the restoration of creation shall be contemporaneous and parallel also with the restoration of man. Hence our Lord tells the Apostles that in the restoration they shall sit upon thrones. The word employed is παλιγγενεσία, that is, the new birth or regeneration of all things, the time of the restitution of all things. Martin Luther, commenting upon that text, says, "The restitution of all things means that creation shall put off her sackcloth, and put on her Easter garments"—that is, undergo a great and a blessed change. But there is evidence, I think, of a still more conclusive character in favour of that interpretation

of these passages, which I have indicated in such events as the miracles and life of our blessed Lord. It rests with the reader to weigh the facts I adduce, and decide whether they are conclusive or not. I think I see in every act of Jesus a foreshadow of the complete reversal of the curse that fell alike upon humanity and on the inanimate and animate creation.* Let me mention some of these. Adam in the garden of Eden sinned, was driven into the wilderness, and left there. Jesus in the wilderness triumphed, re-asserted the return of the garden, and gave us the earnest that Paradise shall again be restored. Is it a vain or an unmeaning coincidence that Adam in a garden fell and was driven into the wilderness, and that Jesus steps into the wilderness where Adam was left, regains the garden, and gives us the hope of Paradise again? Adam was in Paradise with the beasts, the lion, the tiger, the lamb; all animals in perfect harmony around him, recognising him as their lord. He sinned; and the instant that

* "It seems a most perplexing law, *that* of animals obviously framed for the destruction of each other; and may we not hope for the literal fulfilment of such a revolution as is set forth in these verses?"—*Chalmers' Daily Readings*, vol. iii. p. 273.

he sinned, each animal was seized with a new instinct, and they have raged against him, as if under the force of a terrible revenge, until this day.

Now, what does Mark say of Jesus? Is what he so says without significance? "Jesus was in the wilderness with the wild beasts." The first Adam threw them all into rage and antagonism by his sin; the second Adam appeared in the midst of them, reduced them to concord, and gave in that wilderness, on a small scale, a foreshadow of that blessed restoration when Nature's groans shall cease, and man shall again be lord of all, and all living things shall do him obedience.

In the miracles of Jesus, which are recorded in the gospels, we have the same idea indicated again and again. For instance, when he multiplied the bread—when he stilled the seas—when he hushed the winds—when he healed the sick—he gave, I think, not only specimens, but instalments of what will be. I believe that these miracles of Jesus were not mere displays of power, nor mere credentials of his Messiahship. Such they were, but more than this they also were; I believe they were earnests and

prophetic auguries of that coming and blessed day, when creation, recovered from its bondage, shall be introduced into the glorious liberty of the children of God. Jesus seems to me to have been the turner back, as it were, of the currents of creation, which were all rushing away from God—the restorer in the earnest of a blessed and a glorious transformation of all things—the great Reformer of that of which he was once the great Creator, which he made very beautiful, and which man's sin alone made very bad.

In the next place it seems to me—and this is a fact worth thinking of—that ever since Jesus suffered, wrought miracles, healed the sick, stilled the ocean, and showed his control over rebellious nature—by bringing it back again into order,—man has gained by degrees a greater mastery over all things, as if then humanity received a new impulse; and in proportion to this Christian light (I do not say Christianity is the cause, but it certainly is a coincidence) has been his civilization; and in proportion to that, the gradual authority which he seems to be regaining over that nature, the reins of which he lost in Paradise, but which under the blessing of God, and by the appliance

Jesus has now partially, and will again completely, put into his redeemed and sanctified hand. It is to me a most delightful experience to see any one discovery in science or in art, which restores to man, however slightly, the mastery over created things. Is it not true, that since Jesus healed the sick there has been given a greater impulse to curative science than ever was felt before? Is not medicine, with all its defects, with all the obloquy cast upon it, because it cannot do everything, progressive? Is it not true, that some diseases, once thought incurable, are now almost extirpated? Small-pox is now, not only curable, but almost banished from our land. And was the discovery of this mode of cure simply chance? Will you say it was accident? I believe it to have been as much an inspiration of the God of providence as the Bible is an inspiration of the God of grace. Is it not fact, that man's life is longer than it was? If you do not believe me, ask the Insurance Societies, and they will tell you it is so by some six years. It is much longer than this, if we remember, that the sickly and delicate infant which was lost before, while only the strong ones survived, is now spared, and,

of art, grows up to manhood. Is not all this gain? Is it not progress in the direction in which the miracles of Jesus lay, and in the reversal of that curse which "brought death into the world, and all our woe?" Is it not also true, that operations once thought perfectly impossible, are now performed by our surgeons with safety and success? Is not that recent wonderful discovery, chloroform, one of the most providential blessings that God has given us? I look upon it as a most significant instalment of the reversal of the curse, stilling the groans and travail of the creature, an inspiration from God; and connected with the special curse pronounced upon Eve and her daughters, and read in the light of that curse, it is, to my mind, a beautiful earnest of what will be—a forelight of the approaching dawn—an augury of millennial days, when there shall be no more pain, nor tears, nor sorrow, nor crying. Is it not true, that since Jesus stilled the ocean, and hushed its rude waves, man is more the lord of the sea than he ever was before? Explain these things as you like, you must suffer me to view them in the light of my Bible; and this light shows me, that in these the creature

itself is more and more emancipated from the bondage into which it was thrown by man's sin, into the glorious liberty of the sons of God. These do not bring on the millennium, but they are hints, intimations, auguries, foreshadows to man, that what God has promised in his Word, he will faithfully perform in his providence. Since Jesus re-asserted man's control over all nature, man is making progress more and more every day in doing without animal power, and carrying on all his designs and his intercourse, by subjecting inanimate nature to his government and control. One of the most beautiful sights to my mind, when I look around me in the world, is the fact, that the poor horse, that once ran, and toiled, and drudged till he died, often under cruel treatment, and prematurely under any treatment, is, to a certain extent, relieved from the severity of his bondage, and employed only for lighter work; that now the inhabitant of the old world can meet the inhabitant of the new world in the short space of fourteen days; that man can now la hold of the red lightnings, which were thought to be the exclusive prerogative of Deity, and send these lightnings on his errands from end to end of

nations, and it may be soon from end to end of the habitable globe. Men think what others only dreamed of; they do what former generations dimly thought of; and they glory in what others inadequately and imperfectly did. Are not these prophetic facts? Is not all this a convincing presumption, that creation itself shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the sons of God? Do we not see an impulse in the same direction, in those facts which are occurring every day around us? Is not commerce beginning to teach men as policy, what Christianity has been teaching as a duty—that it is men's interest not to quarrel with each other? Is not agriculture, under a new stimulus, beginning to develop greater energies; man says, to feed him—and so far it is true; but God says, to be an augury of that day when the sixty-seventh Psalm shall be translated from prophecy into fact—when the "earth shall yield her increase, and God, even our own God, shall bless us?" And this very year, will there not be in our own great city, gathered from all the ends of the world, men skilful in science, accomplished in the arts, who shall bring together all the products

of all parts of the globe, as evidence of the stage of progress which humanity has reached? Will not this be, in some respect, a step toward deciding national superiority, not by an appeal to the sword, which is the dire necessity, but by an appeal to the products of the mind? And when that exposition shall take place, under a most gracious prince, what will be the result? I can predict it. The nation that has most Bibles and most Christianity, will show that its fingers have most skill; that its genius has the most inexhaustible resources; and that the people that are at the head of all the nations of the earth in Christian light, and liberty, and privilege, will excel them all in most things besides. What are all these, then, but auguries and foretastes of what will be? These will not bring on the millennium—I expect no such thing; but I look on these as flowers gathered from its glorious gardens, to let us know that we shall see the whole; I look on these as voices crying in the wilderness, reminding us of bright hopes, and ringing in Creation's heart: "You shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God."

I know that in looking around us at creation, and witnessing the present state of disorder in which it lies, we sometimes feel as if this were its normal state—that creation is, as the Pantheists say, just what God made it, and that it is far better it should be now just as we find it; for if there were no storms, nor incidents, nor accidents, nor tempests, men would not exert so much industry and energy, or come under so suitable a discipline. I have no doubt that creation in its fall is more fitted for man in his fall than creation in its happiness would be. But it is the infected house that suits the infected inhabitant; it is the marred and dismantled home that indicates the presence of the criminal. Sin is the spring of all creation's restlessness; it is sin that has wrecked it. It is because man became sinful that the earth became barren; it was because man lost his allegiance to God that nature ceased her allegiance to him, and that we have war and discord instead of peace, and creation clothed in sackcloth and in crape, groaning in travail and in pain, seeking her emancipation. But the restored King requires a restored kingdom.

It is stated that nature is "subject to vanity"

and corruption. And what is meant by vanity? This is meant: all things in nature, instead of being applied to their holy and legitimate ends, are employed in promoting sinful and criminal ends. The sun lights the thief to his spoil; and the moon the robber to his prey—they were never meant to do so. The stars guide the course, and the winds fill the sails, of the pirate-craft—they were never meant to do so. The earth gives gold and silver to satisfy men's avarice—it was never meant to do so. The geologist drags argument from the bowels of the earth, and the astronomer tears by force reasons from the heaven above him, to prove that no footsteps of a God are in the one, and that no glory of a God is reflected from the other. This was not meant to be. But what does it show?—that creation is subject to bondage, and turned to a usage for which it was never intended. But it is written, it shall be delivered; this is not to be its final rest. The earth is wearied of being a place of graves; and the sun of shining upon sick-beds and tears. The air was not created to be breathed by slaves; the fire that warms us was not designed to burn the martyr; the trees of the forest and

the stones of the field were not meant to make a prison for an Achilli; music was not given to be turned into *Ave Marias* and *Stabat Maters*, and to yield its incense to idolatry. What is all this perversion of nature but its subjection to vanity? What is nature's condition under it but groaning and travailing, and waiting to be delivered? and these groans grow louder as the dawn of liberty grows clearer. It is recorded that when the statue of Memnon was raised in Egypt, the instant the first rays of the rising sun fell upon it, it emitted beautiful sounds: so these groans of creation are the sounds it emits under the first rays of that coming Sun, now below the horizon, or shining only horizontally, but soon to ascend his meridian throne, and send down his vertical splendour: then all creation shall be restored, and Paradise regained.

I am now showing you latent, but instructive harmonies; and whenever we can show harmonies between God's book and God's work, we are casting light upon the conclusion that this book is from God, and enlarging our views to the limits of what God himself has revealed. It has often occurred to me (and I do not think

it is merely fancy) that everything in nature seems to be pushing up, and pressing into a state that is better. Every one will tell you, who has paid attention to the subject, that all nature seems now as if conscious of some load lying upon it, and anxious to heave it off, and to be something better than we now see it. Take a plant, and put on it something that will press it down, and hide it from the light: it will creep about everywhere searching for a crevice, and having found it, will send forth its blossoms in greater beauty; as if the very plant felt a noble consciousness that it had gained the victory under circumstances so unfavourable. The very stone bursts into crystal, as if trying to rise to the dignity of flowers. Look at the difference between the roses of the fields and the roses of our gardens, and see what art has done. It has made the one rich and beautiful; while sin, the curse, and the fall, have made the other poor and insignificant. The peach and apricot, art's transformation of miserable fruits—the apple, evolved from a sour crab,* are all evidences of hidden possibilities of

* The thistle is an imperfect or blasted flower, not originally created as it now is.

beauty which a millennial year will call forth. All this is nature pushing upward, and, by the appliances of man's skill, made to develop her hidden and greater riches. When the whole burden shall be lifted away, and the curse reversed, the rose that we, by art and skill, have made so wonderfully more beautiful than it was, will become ten thousand times more glorious still.

In every tree and plant and flower, there are hidden virtues that we cannot now develop, but which God will develop into millennial forests and millennial roses, and show in all a grandeur and a magnificence such as we have never yet dreamed of. Even the brute creation seems to me a conscious sufferer. Have you ever watched a dying animal—a dying horse, for instance? There is something in the poor animal's eye, as it looks upon the master so pitifully, that it seems as if the animal had within it some dim and mysterious longing for a deliverance that man cannot give. The celebrated German poet and philosopher, Goëthe, who lived and died a sceptic, and whose testimony, therefore, was not meant to confirm that of the Bible, has said, "When I stand all alone

at night in open nature, I feel as though nature were a spirit, and begged redemption of me." What a striking testimony to the words of Paul! And again he says: "Often, often have I had the sensation as if nature, in wailing sadness, entreated something of me; so that not to understand what she longed for has cut me to the very heart." Do you not see that the highest conjectures of genius tread upon the skirts of what God has revealed? and that nature, when left to itself, feels and owns her agony, and the sceptic describes her in the formulas of Scripture, as feeling restless for deliverance, and so adds his testimony to the truth of God's words? But I present another witness—that of a great and good man. Martin Luther says: "Albeit the creature (the dumb creature) hath not speech such as we have, it hath a language still, which God the Holy Spirit heareth and understandeth. How nature groaneth for the wrong it must endure from the ungodly who so misuse and abuse it!" Here we have the sceptic Goëthe and the eminent Christian Luther concurring in the same thing. And the poet who is supposed to tread nearest to the inspired, says very beautifully:—

"To me they seem,
Those far sad streaks that reach along the west,
Like strains of song still yearning from the chords
Of nature's orchestra. Weary, yet still
She sinks with longing to her winter-sleep,
Dreams ever of that birth for whose bright dawn
The whole creation groans. Fair, sad companion!
I join my sigh with thine.—Yet none can be
Our sigh's interpreter, but that great God
Who breathes eternal wisdom, made, redeem'd,
And loves us both, and ever moves as erst
On thy dark waters' face."

Another poet has written:—

"Live not the stars and mountains? Are the waves
Without a spirit? Are the dropping caves
Without a feeling in their silent tears?"

Such are testimonies confirmatory of the conclusion to which I have here come.

It seems, then, that we may indulge the hope that all nature shall be delivered. Gold and silver shall no longer beautify the shrines of idols, nor gratify the miser's avarice. The tongue and the pen—those mighty engines of good or evil, shall become the priests of God and the ministers of holiness. Music shall be lifted from its degradation, and made to magnify and praise God, its key-note Christ. Every star shall point to the Morning Star; every flower, to the Rose of Sharon; every stock and

every stone, to the Rock of Ages. The ocean shall mirror forth His brightness, and the chimes of the waves and the rush of the wind shall tell forth the glory of Him who made and sustains them.

But all this, we are told, is coincident with another fact, and a fact that most intensely interests us; namely, "the manifestation of the sons of God." The language of the Apostle is, that the earnest expectation of creation waiteth for "the manifestation of the sons of God." Human nature groans, waiting for the adoption which we long for, to wit, "the redemption of our body." This is the ultimate event, the revelation of which will be coëval with the restoration of all creation; for it is said that whenever God's sons shall be manifest, God's creation shall be glorified. What then is meant by the manifestation of the sons of God? I answer, we should ascertain first what is meant by their being hidden. "They shall be manifest," implies they are now hidden. But if this were only an implication, I would not dwell on it, but the Apostle John says, "The world knoweth us not, as it knew not Christ. It doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know

that when Christ shall appear, we shall be like him, that is, be manifested, for then we shall see him as he is." In what respect are Christians now hidden? I answer, Our life, as the Apostle says, is hid with Christ in God; our nutriment is hidden manna; the springs of our joy and the sources of our grief, the elements of our victory, are facts that the world does not appreciate, and that it cannot understand: for instance, the beauty that is peculiar to a true Christian is a beauty that others cannot understand. A worldly man admires the beauty of a cathedral, the splendour of the Pantheon, the grandeur of the Pyramids, gorgeous robes, sensuous rites, brilliant ceremonies; but he cannot understand that inner, but infinitely more glorious beauty, the beauty of holiness, "the King's daughter all gorious *within*."

The source of a Christian's holiness is entirely hidden to the world: the world cannot understand why he should be more holy, more pure, more just, more upright than it is; it cannot understand how salvation by grace can be separated from license to sin; how I can be saved without works, and yet fail to live without morality. It supposes that salvation without

works must necessarily be a life without holiness; but we can explain it, if the world will understand the explanation, in this way. A Christian has perfect power to sin; he has a tongue that may speak evil, an eye that may accept improper impressions, feet to go, and hands that can shed blood, but he does not do any of these things. We do not say that a man who has become a Christian is denuded of his power to sin, but that he has lost his taste or his liking for sin. For instance, a good musician could compose bad music, and play very badly on an instrument, but still he does not do so. He has fingers that can write badly, or touch the key-notes clumsily, but yet they do not. Why? Not from want of power, but because his cultivated and consummate taste keeps him from doing so. Again, a mother might throw her babe into the Thames. She has a hand to act, she has feet to walk, power to do it, but she does not. Why? Because she has an inner affection that restrains her from doing so. A Christian, in the same manner, has the physical power to sin, just as any other person has, and he may steal, commit adultery, or he may kill; but he does not.

Why? Because the same gospel that delivers him from the practice of sin, delivers him from the preference of sin also. But this which to us is all beauty, harmony, and joy, is to the world all mystery, because the manifestation of God's sons is a future thing; the hiding of God's sons is the present actual thing. In the same manner, the sources of a Christian's joy are now all hidden and mysterious; they are all a mystery to the world. The world cannot understand how you can feel joy without the opera once a week, and the play-house twice, and the card-table occasionally; the world cannot understand how you can be a happy man, and yet not plunge into all the dissipations, the excitement, the stimulating follies, of a scene passing away. The world cannot understand it. Why? Because your life is hid with Christ in God; the manifestation will be; the secret, or hidden life, now is. But even to a worldly man, we might illustrate this. One says, "I wonder you can sit ten minutes listening to the Messiah of Handel." My answer is, "God has given me a susceptibility that you have not." Another wonders how you can gaze with joy on the Crucifixion, or the Descent from

the Cross, by Rubens, or spend days in painting that old tree, or sketching that beautiful landscape. You answer, "I have a taste and a susceptibility of pleasure from this, that God has not given to you." A mathematician once read Milton's "Paradise Lost," from beginning to end, and he said it was worthless, because it demonstrated nothing. Why did he say so? God has bestowed on others a taste that he has withheld from that mathematician. And when a Christian derives joy from self-sacrifice, from prayer, from the privileges and the duties of Christianity, it is because God has given to the regenerate a taste and a susceptibility of joy of a kind that he has not given to the natural man; therefore a natural man has no more idea of the secret and spring of a Christian's joy than a blind man has of light, or a deaf man of sound. The Christian's life is hidden now: the manifestation will be. Again, Christians in this dispensation are often hid by persecution, or by the lowliness of their circumstances. The most eminent Christian may live in a cellar, and he may appear to be less Christian than a far less advanced Christian who occupies a place of eminence. God judges Christianity by what

the heart would do; man judges by what the hand can do. But one may have great benevolence, but not have the means of beneficence; and therefore such a one is hidden from the world.

> "Full many a gem of purest ray serene,
> The dark unfathomed caves of ocean bear;
> Full many a flower is born to blush unseen,
> And waste its sweetness in the desert air."

Christians, in this dispensation, are hidden by their own internal imperfections. Never let us forget, that essential Christian character is compatible with many lamentable imperfections. And when we see in another the fault that we are least inclined to, it requires much grace in us to admit that such a one is a Christian. Never, therefore, let us forget that grace subdues—it does not extirpate human idiosyncrasy. Peter remained, after his conversion, what he was before, as to his personal temperament: grace repressed, not exterminated, his passion. In that rough casket there may be a precious jewel; under that violent temper there may slumber calm and beautiful depths of Christian love; and in that rude and apparently uncultivated man, there may be a spirit still as the

stars, and beautiful as God can make it. We need, in judging of each other, more light, and still more charity. Besides, Christians are often hidden by the peculiar way in which their character is developed. Grace acts in different ways. In one man it speaks; in another man it is silent; in another man it is still. In one man grace has so much to do with the inner work of crucifying the works of the flesh, that there is scarcely time for the outer work; in another man the inner work is nearly done, or much advanced, and he has much time for the outer work of making his friends Christians, and enriching them with the grace he himself has. You must not, therefore, conclude that he is not a Christian who does nothing externally, or that he is most a Christian who does much externally, but recollect that each, if a believer, has his own specific mission, and to that mission duty ought to restrict and confine him.

Thus, then, Christians are hidden; their life is hid, their grace is hidden, their peace is hidden; the world knoweth them not, it cannot understand them; but we are told the day comes when there shall be the manifestation, or literally, the apocalypse (for that is the word) of the

sons of God. Then shall be true what God himself hath said: "And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of Hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels:" they shall shine and sparkle like jewels in the crown of our Lord, or, as it is stated by our Lord himself, when he speaks in the Gospel of St. Matthew: "And before Him shall be gathered all nations: And He shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left." Then God's sons will be manifest, clearly and unequivocally so, as it is stated by John in his Epistle: "Beloved, now are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." But in the mean time what does he say? "The world knoweth us not, because it knew him not." What harmony between Malachi, Matthew, Paul, and John? What evidence that they had but one key-note, one capital to be drawn on—but one Redeemer to be directed by!

Now, the instant that the sons of God are manifest, creation shall experience a new and

glorious genesis; its groans shall be transposed into songs, its sufferings into joy, its restlessness into true and perpetual peace. Are you, reader, for our deepest interest lies here, a son of God? Can you say from the very heart, "Abba, Father?" Are you among those of whom the apostle says, "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God?"—For the apostle always associates the personal privilege with the surrounding glory. Is that true of you? "And if children, then heirs;" and if we suffer with Christ, we shall be glorified together. And the sufferings which we now endure, hidden, disguised, persecuted, maligned, misrepresented, are not worth thinking about, when we reflect on the glory which shall be revealed. For creation suffers with us; and creation shall be emancipated with us. Can you then say—"Our Father, which art in heaven?" Can you pray the Lord's prayer? A child can repeat it, the Romanist can mutter it twenty times upon his beads; a parrot might be taught to talk it; human lips may utter it; but only a heart that has been regenerated by the Holy Spirit of God can pray it. It is easy to say prayers; anybody can do this: it is only

Christians who can pray prayers; the sons of God alone can do this. Are you, then, my reader, a son of God? This is a very momentous question. It is a question that must not be left unsettled. You ought to take it home to your hearts, and honestly look it in the face, and settle it in the sight of God, and in the prospect of the judgment-seat.

"It is not, then, a poet's dream,
An idle vaunt of song;
Such as beneath the moon's soft gleam
On vacant fancies throng,

"Which bids us see, in heaven and earth
In all fair things around,
Strong yearnings for a blest new birth
With sunless glories crowned."

CHAPTER VI.

THE CHRISTIAN'S AGONY AND HOPE.

The head that God breaks with affliction's stroke,
Oft, like the flower when stricken by the storm,
Rises from earth more steadfastly to turn
Itself to heaven, whither as a guide,
Kindly though stern, affliction still is leading,
Even to the home of endless joy and peace.
Here, on the borders of that better land,
Shall Pain's sharp ministry for ever cease.
Then shall we bless Thee safely landed there,
And know above how good thy teachings were.
Then feel thy keenest strokes to us in love were given,
That hearts most crushed on earth shall most rejoice in heaven.

"And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first-fruits of the spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body."—ROM. viii. 23.

I HAVE endeavoured to show, that the whole state of the created world is at this moment a state of suffering—lightened, I admit, by gleams of hope, and alleviated occasionally by counter-visitations, joys, and consolations; but that if we look into the earth as a whole, we shall find it misused and abused; if we look at

dumb animals, we find them treated as they were never meant to be; if at the flowers and fruits of the earth, they have lost their Eden bloom, and have not regained that which is promised. In other words, we have the fact streaming into our minds by every avenue and from all points of the compass, from the height and from the depth, from all around us, from animate and inanimate nature, that some dire stroke has smitten the world, and that under that dire catastrophe it is fevered, restless, and in agony. But to give us comfort in the midst of all this, we are told by Scripture, that creation, thus suffering, shall not suffer for ever; that it is subjected to vanity, but it is in hope; and that it shall be delivered from its present state; its groans shall be transposed into songs; its sufferings shall be turned into rejoicings; and as the world began with Paradise, the world shall end with Paradise, when all things shall be beautiful as at the first, and more so, for redemption shall exceed creation in its grandeur and its magnificence.

I noticed that the very term "nature," *natura* (from *nascor*), means about to be born; and that, therefore, when we say "nature," we

mean that this whole creation is groaning and travailing in pain ready to give birth to a new one—what new one? "The new heavens and the new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness;" distinguished from the earth that now is, as our bodies, when raised from the graves, will be distinguished from the bodies that now are —the same bodies, but infinitely more glorious and beautiful.

And now, says the Apostle—not only does nature groan, or, to use another expression, not only is nature in pain, desirous of delivery—seeking to put on her glorious vestments—what Martin Luther called her Easter robes; but we also, who are Christians, are likewise suffering and enduring great pain till we be presented with our new vestments—our Easter robes—namely, the adoption which now is, in its fullness; and the redemption, or recovery of the body, which will be.

We are here taught, first of all, that Christians have a peculiar privilege—namely, the first-fruits of the Spirit; secondly, that they are now in a painful state, groaning, or in pain, "waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body;" and, thirdly, that they may

entertain a blessed hope—namely, that that adoption shall be theirs in its fulness, and that redemption of the body shall assuredly take place. We have these three leading thoughts clearly indicated in the words I have taken from Paul's Epistle to the Romans.

Let me turn your attention to the fact—that Christians have something which is here called the "first-fruits of the Spirit." What is meant by these? In Deuteronomy (xxvi. 1, 2) we are told: "When thou art come in unto the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee for an inheritance, and possessest it, and dwellest therein, that thou shalt take the first of all the fruit of the earth, which thou shalt bring of thy land that the Lord thy God giveth thee, and shalt put it in a basket, and shalt go unto the place which the Lord thy God shall choose to place his name there." It is here a first-fruits, or a portion of the produce of the land, produced as an earnest of the whole. The same thing is mentioned in Leviticus. We read, also, of the fruits of the Spirit. In order to know what the first-fruits are, it is right to know what the whole fruits are. If we wish to know what the first-fruits of a harvest must have been,

we must first ascertain what the nature of the whole product of the harvest was. We read, that the fruits of the Spirit are "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, meekness, temperance, gentleness, goodness, faith." Then, assuredly, the first-fruits of the Spirit must be some of these, it may be in perfection, and others of these, it may be, in imperfection: but all bearing a certain likeness and proportion to the grand harvest which is the fruit of the vintage, and the harvest of the world; when believers shall be gathered from amid the tares left behind, and introduced to the rest that remaineth for the people of God. We also read, in the Epistle to the Corinthians, that the Lord Jesus is "the first-fruits of them that sleep." It may be that the Apostle alludes to this; and that by the first-fruits of the Spirit he may also indicate that presentiment, that earnest within us, by the Spirit of God, of the redemption or recovery of our body. But I incline to think it is the prior one—namely, that in this world a believer has some measure of joy, of peace, of gentleness, of goodness, and of faith, the creation of the Spirit, as a first-fruit: as if it were a sheaf cut down and produced, to show what will be

the joyful harvest of blessedness, what the air we shall breathe, the light we shall see, and the happiness we shall feel, in that future world into which we long to be admitted.

The first-fruits must be that measure of conformity to Christ, those bright truths, and those blessed hopes which a Christian now is privileged to entertain; a sheaf of the golden harvest; a cluster, like the grapes of Eshcol, to show, in the wilderness of this world, how fertile, how rich, how beautiful the productions of the better land are; a streak, as it were, of the morning dawn, to show us, as that dawn gilds the mountain tops, how bright and glorious is that better day that spreads beyond the hills, where is gentleness and goodness, and happiness, and peace, for ever. Thus, then, Christians have a first-fruits, or an earnest of the glory and happiness, or the harvest, that is to be at the end.

This fact, so very plain, teaches a lesson, which it is important to notice, namely, that we must know something of heaven upon earth, if we are destined to know anything of heaven hereafter. It is the greatest mistake in the world to suppose that man may live here

as he likes, and yet is sure to drift into heaven, if he will only let the waters and currents of society carry him as they will. Such is not the teaching of God. The contrary is. We are taught plainly in this blessed Book, that the man who will be admitted into heaven hereafter, must have a portion of heaven admitted into his heart in this present life; in other words, that he must have the first-fruits before he shall reap the full harvest; that the people are prepared for the place that is prepared for them. By what we now are, we may ascertain what and where we shall be hereafter. The spring from which we draw our joy and our happiness now, is fed from the sea of bitterness and misery that overwhelms the lost, or from the ocean of purity, and love, and joy, which rolls for ever in the presence of God and of the Lamb.

It cannot, then, be said, if these thoughts be true, as they can be unquestionably proved, that he is in the way to heaven in whose heart the world is all,—whose supreme aim and object are the acquisition of money, and wealth, and greatness. These things may occupy their place; but it is a very low one; the better and the

brighter world should be first in our heart, and chief in our pursuit. We do not bid any cease to labour, or to have any love for money; but it must be a love in its place, and according to its worth, and far below a love infinitely superior—the love of the unsearchable riches of Christ. We do not bid any cease to admire the beautiful flower, or inhale its fragrance, or taste of the innocent joys of the world as they pass through; all we ask is, that you would pause only for an instant to do so. We are strangers and pilgrims, looking for our home, which is beyond the stars, and for which we must be made fit in this present world. Let me ask you, reader, Have you the first-fruits of the Spirit? Do you know what it is to be joyful, —to be happy, as Christians are? Do you know by practical experience, that Christianity is meant to make men happy? that no man can be so happy as a Christian? and that no man can be happy, in the right sense of the word—having that happiness which fills the whole soul, and gives it perfect repose—who does not know that his sins are forgiven, through a Saviour's sacrifice, and his heart renewed by a Saviour's Spirit? and that, whether he is smitten down

by sudden death, or lingers in protracted sickness, in his case severance from the body is admission into joy unutterable and full of glory?

Let me ask, dear reader, the very important question, Do you think of the solemn truths of the Bible? Do you *read* and *study* it, as a man in earnest? If you were about to take possession of a large estate, would you not read its title-deeds? Would you not study its nature, the contents of its soil, its trees, its flowers, its products? Can we be on the way to heaven, and under influences from above, if we take no interest in the nature of heaven? Can I be—I appeal to conscience—in the way that leads to heaven, if I never think of it, or pray in the prospect of it, or study the Book that portrays it, or ask God by his Holy Spirit to guide me to it?

Such as these are the fruits of the Spirit—such are the characteristics of those who are groaning within themselves, waiting for the adoption. Let us now inquire, What is the pain that believers feel in a world disordered and out of course?

The very first ground of a Christian's pain must be the consciousness of his own sin.

Who has the greatest sense of sin within him? The man who has the clearest apprehension of God, who has made the greatest attainment in conformity to the character of God. The more light we have, the more unworthy we see ourselves; so much so, that he who stands upon the loftiest pinnacle of Christian attainment, evermore bows his spirit lowliest in the very dust, and cries from the heart, "God be merciful to me a sinner, unclean, unclean!" The Apostle Paul, when he was first converted, said:—"I am not worthy to be called an apostle;" when he made greater progress in Christianity, he said: "I am the least of saints;" but just before he died, when his views of heaven were brightest, and his knowledge of himself the clearest, he exclaimed: "I am the chief of sinners." Great knowledge makes scholars humble; great holiness will make great Christians humble also. Wherever we see an humble man, we have reflected in the humility of that man, the shadow of a great man, for true greatness is ever humble; littleness is ever conceited, and full of itself. The greatest saint will always be the last to boast of himself—he will be the most humble

before God and man. The Apostle Paul describes his sense of sin in his own experience, when he says: "I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin;" so that "the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do." "Oh wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" This is the picture of the Apostle Paul: he too was groaning within himself, waiting to be delivered. A Christian has, as it were, two experiences: he has one state in which he groans, waiting and longing to be delivered; and he has another state in which he tastes the first-fruits of the joy that is to be revealed, and is perfectly happy. Thus the first reason why we are distressed, is a sense of sin within ourselves.

But a second ground of a Christian's pain lies in what he sees around him. Jeremiah was so distressed by what he saw, that he cried: "Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night!" David himself said, that the tears ran down his face because men kept not God's law. Enlightened Christians cannot look around them

on the world, and see children growing up without education—or subjected, in other cases, to an education exhausted of what should be its chief element, religion, or instinct with a corrupt and superstitious religion—without being grieved and vexed. Do we not see on all sides the rich, not doing what is simply requisite to their just dignity, but wasting in needless extravagance the wealth that they possess? Do we not see the poor envious of the rich, becoming exasperated, sometimes most wickedly, but most naturally, against them, and wishing that they could sweep them away? Do we not witness pride in one quarter, and rebellion and insurrection in another? Do we not see beside us the victims of sin, and crime, and wickedness, and its patrons too? in other quarters, an intense thirst for making money, and getting rich, to which everything that is noble, generous, elevating, intellectual, and moral, is sacrificed, and made to give way? Sabbaths are not hallowed as they were, and increase of superstition and scepticism is too evident in many quarters. Are not men passing at the rate of a thousand per week, in this metropolis alone, into the future world, who—to speak in

the most charitable terms—do not give strong evidence that they have the first-fruits of the Spirit, and are the children of God? If Christians see such things, they must be vexed. If we see them, and are unaffected by the sight, there is something wrong in our nature; and if we be grieved as we see these things, we must, if Christians indeed, make an effort to arrest and stay them. Do we not find, in looking from the world into the church, only greater sin, because committed in greater light? Do we not see that universal church—for I take every section of it—that was raised up by God to roll back the torrent of corruption, becoming itself cold, careless, ungodly: many ministers preaching another gospel, and practising another Christianity; disputes, divisions, and separation in every part of the church, till its strength is utterly wasted in internal fever, instead of being expended in beneficence, in missionary devotedness, in sacrifice? Do we not see forms superseding godliness; men beginning to think that their obligation to Christ can be repaid in ceremonies, and their duties to mankind in rubrics, and charity finding its proper expression, not in disinterested and generous sacrifice, but in say-

ing, "Go, and be clothed, be warmed," while they do not give the things that are requisite? Can a Christian help feeling grieved when such things stare him in the face? Is it, therefore, strange that the Apostle should say: "We Christians groan within ourselves; are distressed by what takes place around us: and long, under the pressure of that distress, for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body?"

Not only does a Christian become distressed at what he sees in the world of rational men, and in the church of professing Christian men, but also by what he sees in the irrational world around him. St. Paul tells us that creation groans and travails. The restlessness of all things, disorder, suffering, confusion, depress and grieve the believer as he looks and listens. When we see the sun and moon lighting the murderer to his victim, and the robber to his spoil, we must be grieved that luminaries made for such beneficent purposes are used for such vile ones. When we see, again, the wind and the wave lending their energies to the slave-ship —the earth yielding its gold to feed avarice, and to form idols: when we see architecture, music, painting, statuary, contributing their resources

to superstition, and not to pure and undefiled religion—universities and schools teaching what is positively false, or, what I think is not less dangerous, leaving out religion in their teaching altogether, as if the experiment had to be made whether the world can be worked without religion, and mankind cohere without God; when we look around us, and see genius of the highest stamp expending its strength in order to construct contemptible jokes, or gilding iniquity in order to make it popular, or injuring precious institutions in order to destroy them; when we see the press infected in many of its lowest parts with the vilest insubordination, infidelity, wickedness, and sympathy with sin—and power allied to what is evil, instead of being allied to what is good—Christians must be grieved: they cannot but bemoan such facts: they cannot but long and pray for the day when all this shall cease; they cannot each help saying—

"Mine ear is pain'd,
My soul is sick with every day's report
Of wrong and outrage with which earth is fill'd.
* * * * *
Lands intersected by a narrow frith
Abhor each other; mountains interposed
Make enemies of nations, who had else,
Like kindred drops, been mingled into one."

If this be so, one cannot but mourn over it, and long for that blessed day when the Maker of the world shall become the Reformer of the world, and shall set to right all things that are now out of course.

Christians must lament and grieve at the persecutions which they are doomed to bear. If a person now avow honestly that he believes the Bible, that he looks chiefly for a better world, that he dare not be dishonest because he fears God, that he dare not commit sin because Christ died for him, how many would laugh, or call him fanatical or superstitious! If another say, "I do not choose to go to places where I think Christianity, my Christianity at least, cannot be improved; I do not choose to go where the obscene joke will be uttered, and the obnoxious inuendo will be made, because I think that on me and my children it may inflict contaminating evil, he will be told by the thoughtless, the worldly, and unthinking: "You are a Methodist; you are a saint; you are a person over-righteous." It is not over-righteousness—it is duty. The formula of persecution may be changed from the faggot and wild beasts into a sneer, ridicule, or

contempt: but it is still true, not because I think so, but because God says so: "The carnal mind is enmity against God;" and, "In the world ye shall have tribulation." We must expect that duty will be still set in sacrifice. When I have sometimes told men, "It is your duty to stand by this, or your duty to maintain that," they have said: "Oh, if we do so, we shall meet with this opposition, we shall have this and that trouble." Trouble, suffering, loss, are the penalties that men must pay in this world for the discharge of duty; and the man who will not stand by duty because it is set in trial and in conflict, never read our blessed Master's story, nor tasted of our blessed Master's spirit. Duty is the highest thing; all else must yield to it. Do not say: "I cannot do it, because I am situated here, or situated there." We have nothing under heaven to do with circumstances, but to conquer them; we have nothing to do with opposition, but to meet and master it. Whatever God in his providence points out to be duty, face it in God's strength; be strong; yea, be strong, as the angel said to Daniel, and you will conquer. To do good and to communicate, forget not; for with such

sacrifices (and they are so in this world) God is well pleased.

Can we look around us in the circle of our friends and relatives, without seeing much to grieve and vex us—losses, sicknesses, sorrow, pain, bereavement, widowhood, orphanage? Will any man tell me that the world moves just as God made it? Is it possible to conclude, as some have concluded conscientiously enough, that the world is at its *maximum* of happiness? that the horse in the omnibus is in the full enjoyment of all he was meant to have? Can any one say that our circles of friends and relatives are just what they were originally meant to be? or that God designed that the lion should devour the lamb, that the hawk should destroy the lark, or the bird that sings in ecstasy in the sunshine? Is this natural? We call it natural, because we are accustomed to it; but it is not the normal state of the world: it is a state of disease. A man who has walked all his life with crutches, thinks it perfectly natural that he should do so; he who has been blind all his life, has no idea of light, and thinks he is in the normal or natural state; we are so much accustomed to a world out of course, that we

think it is also in its natural state. Sin pierced the world to its core, when it fell upon it like a foul blot; and it has convulsed it ever since; and there is not a thing upon the earth, not a pain in the human body, not a loss in the family circle, that does not tell us that sin has entered, and, if we be Christians, that does not make us long for that day when sin, the prolific parent, shall be utterly destroyed, and head-aches, and heart-aches, and tears, and sorrows, the progeny of sin, shall be put away for ever.

We grieve, and are vexed within ourselves, because of the obscurity of our views, even in things we partially see. How is it that Christians differ from each other? How is it that we differ sometimes on the meaning of the same passage—though not in essential things—and that the principles we do know, we know so imperfectly? Are we not conscious at times of wishing we could see that truth, and harmonise this difficulty, in a way which we cannot do now? Our present experience is, that the greatest light is always in the neighbourhood of the darkest shadow. The principles that we do know we find bring up a number of other

principles that we do not know. We have no sooner brought one truth within the horizon, than a train of dark and mysterious ones follow; so much so, that the known is only the vestibule of the unknown; and the more we know, the more we find remains still to be known. At all this we cannot help being grieved and vexed, and longing more earnestly for the perfect day in which what we now see "through a glass darkly," we shall see "face to face."

Another cause why Christians grieve within themselves—though it may seem strange, yet it is true—is the foretaste they have of the better world. The light that shines upon them from the skies, makes them long to see that light fully: the snatches of the harmonies of heaven that sometimes break upon their ears, make them long for the glorious jubilee into which they shall one day be ushered; so much so, that they can say often with the poet—

> "There is a land of pure delight,
> Where saints immortal reign;
> Eternal day excludes the night,
> And pleasures banish pain;"

And they wish with him that they could make that land theirs, and cross speedily the flood that reaches between.

Such is a brief sketch of a Christian's sorrow in the midst of this world. Let me close this chapter by looking at the object of his hope—"the adoption," as it is here called, to wit, the redemption of the body." Let us study these two as separated, and then as united.

Adoption, as it is called in the admirable Shorter Catechism, is an act of God's grace, or of God's Spirit, by which he admits us into the number and fellowship of the sons of God; or, to quote the Bible, "To as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God;" or, as it is here said, "Ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father." In ancient times adoption was thus distinguished. When a Roman husband who had no children, wished to adopt a child, he first adopted him privately —that was the dictate of affection; he then, by a public act, adopted him openly, and the child became, for all civil purposes, his son, the inheritor of his property, and the bearer of his name. Now, the Apostle's argument here is, that we Christians have already had the private adoption of God's grace, by which we are made

his children: but what we long for is the public adoption, which he calls in another place "the manifestation of the sons of God;" when those not known to be the sons of God by the world, but who are really so, shall be seen to be God's sons, by soul and body being united and manifested as such on the right hand of the Judge.

Here, then, we have, first of all, the beautiful idea that we are the sons of God. I know nothing so sublime as the prayer that Jesus taught his people—"Our Father." What an ennobling thing is it that I can kneel in the presence of that God who fills all space, and covers the universe with His glory, and say to Him, "My Father," "Our Father!" I wonder how any one can live with a sense of a God who is terrible and awful, and without the sense of a God who is "Our Father!" When I have gone into some country of mountains, and cataracts, and streams, and rivers—of hills and valleys; when I have looked at the stupendous crags, and mountains, and rocks—I am stating one experience, and in stating that, I have no doubt I state yours—I have felt how insignificant I was amid those sublime apostles of creation, the great mountains, the everlasting

hills; I have felt as if I were an atom in the universe,—a leaf in the forest, ready to be crushed before the moth. But as I felt so, the blessed thought that my Bible taught me recurred to me: "My Father made all, and I am his child; nay, so truly so, that each hair on my head is counted by him, each grain of sand in my hour-glass is numbered and noted by him,—and I am not lost in the immensity of creation; I am not an atom; I am not a leaf amid all this great panorama of grandeur and magnificence!—I am greater and nobler than them all, for I am the son of God, and He is my Father." It is thus, then, whenever I am awed and overwhelmed by what I see, that I fall back upon what I believe, "My Father." Have you ever noticed, in looking at a mother with a child in her bosom, that, when a stranger happens to be introduced, the child, on first glancing at him, turns away its face, and buries its head in its mother's bosom, and after an interval looks at the stranger again? Why so? It rushed back to the bosom of its mother, to gain strength from her, whom the child knows and loves, in order to bear the sight of the unknown, whom it dreads. Let the children of

God act thus: when awed, and overwhelmed, and startled, let us fall back upon the bosom of our Father, where we shall find consolation, peace, and strength; and thus we shall gaze upon the height and the depth, the awful and the terrible, and have perfect peace and perfect joy. Blessed, then, is that Book that reveals to me that I am a son of God! And how blessed and how delightful is this conviction when we are placed in circumstances of tribulation, of affliction, and bereavement! There is scarcely a family on earth that knows not what bereavement is: you have lost father, or mother, or son, or daughter, or relative—I will not say "lost," for that is a heathen word; a dead Christian is not lost,—he is only lost in the same sense as the star at mid-day—we cannot see him.

> "The dead are like the stars by day,
> Removed from mortal eye,—
> Yet not extinct: they hold their way
> In glory through the sky."

What a blessed thought is this, then, when our parents and children are removed from us! Those that are gone and those that are left, if they are the sons of God, are not really much

separated; they are all living in the same home of our Father: the departed occupy a higher story; we that remain, a lower one. We are in the gloomy crypt; they are in the grand cathedral that is above, where all is light, and joy, and harmony, and peace. That dead father, that dead child that fell asleep in Jesus —they are in the same house with us; they only occupy an upper floor, while we occupy a lower one; and we are waiting till the Voice that made their hearts still and their souls happy shall also speak to us, and say, "Come up hither;" and we shall obey the summons, and on angel wings soar to a brighter and a better home. What a consolation is it, then, to know that we are the sons of God! and what an effort should we make to see that all about us and connected with us are the sons of God also! And how blessed is the thought that our Judge is our Father in the season of trials and afflictions! If I look at God in the light of my sufferings, I must think of him as the heathens thought—as a wrathful God; but if I look at my sufferings in the light of "Our Father," then I feel my sufferings are as beneficent angels. Never forget this precious truth. Take care

that you never look at God in the light of your afflictions, but that you look at your afflictions in the light of God your Father. Make your footing firm in the Fatherhood of God, and from that footing look at everything that befalls you. If you do so, whatever affliction you meet with will be seen as a Father's chastisement, befitting a beloved son. God is no abstraction, as some men think, but he is a Father; He is not a monopoly of mine—"My Father," but he is "Our Father;" He is not a Father that may change and forsake us, but he is eternally our Father.

Having noticed the adoption which is private, I will briefly speak of the public adoption that will be hereafter, which is called the redemption of the body. This is properly an Easter thought; yet it is a thought for every Sabbath. Every Sabbath is an Easter Sunday. For it was on the first day of the week that Christ rose, and the Lord's day is observed on that account.

The soul of the Christian, when he dies, enters into heaven; the body rests in the tomb, in hope again to rise. It is as true that that body in which your soul now lives is redeemed, as it is that your soul, that will be re-united to

it, is redeemed. Christ's blood redeemed the house and the inhabitant for ever. We wait for the redemption—that is, the recovery, the complete restoration of the body—this body and not another. I do not believe that the resurrection means a different body; many persons have a vague notion that it is so. If it were so, it would not be a resurrection. *Resurgo* means, "I rise again." If it were another body, it would be a second creation. It is the same body, purified, refined, exalted. We do not know what enormous susceptibilities of beauty may be deposited in these frail bodies of ours; we know not but that, when the repressive power of sin shall be removed, the body that is now so full of aches, and is day by day approaching the dust, shall unfurl wings we knew not of, and develop powers of which we had no conception, and be a glorious and illuminated shrine for the glorious and happy soul to dwell in for ever and ever. I believe it will be so; and therefore we wait—we long for the redemption of the body.

Who has not heard of beautiful analogies used to prove the resurrection? I have myself employed them, but not to prove the fact, for

they do no such thing; at most they can only obviate difficulties and objections. You will hear persons say: "We have no doubt of the resurrection, because the chrysalis develops itself into the butterfly, the acorn into the oak, the seed into the beautiful flower; and the earth, when she lays aside her winding-sheet of snow, puts on in spring and in summer her green raiment and coronal of flowers." We admit these are all symbols, and only symbols, of the resurrection; they are beautiful analogies that obviate difficulties, but they do not prove the resurrection. If they proved it, why did not Socrates learn the great fact of the resurrection? Yet the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than Socrates. If these proved the resurrection, why did not the women at the sepulchre, or the disciples of Jesus, instantly recollect it? Remember where Jesus was laid—he was laid in a garden, and when was he laid there? Amid the rich dawn of an Asiatic or Eastern spring, when the earth starts into magnificence and beauty, as it were at one sudden blush—in such a spring, and in the midst of a garden, Jesus was laid when he was taken from the Cross. But if these analogies prove the resur-

rection now, why did not the Apostles hear the flowers, and the spring, and the garden, say, "Fear not, He will rise again?" They heard no such summons—they had no such hope. "This is the third day," they said, "and he is not risen." And when he did rise, they could scarcely believe for joy that it was Christ who had risen from the dead. These analogies may obviate difficulties, but they do not prove the fact of a resurrection; we have far better proof than these for the resurrection of the body. One single fact is better than all analogies; and that single fact is, that Jesus opened the grave, "the first-fruits of them that slept." If I am called to go and speak to some mother who has just lost her only son—her stay, her staff, and her strength, and if I wish to comfort her with the belief that her son shall rise again and meet her at the last day, when she is undergoing that grief which weeps bitterly, or that still more bitter grief which cannot weep, what shall I say?—if I talk to that afflicted mother, of butterflies and beautiful flowers, and spring and winter, and all the other analogies, in order to prove the resurrection, she will feel them but cold, cold comfort to her withered and bleeding

heart; but if I talk to her of the widow of Nain,—if I take her to the sisters of Bethany,—if I appeal to the tomb of Joseph in which Jesus lay,—if I let her hear sounding from the skies the voice that was so musical on the earth, "I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." "The day is coming when they that are in their graves shall hear the voice of the Son of man, and come forth;" then she has comfort—she can understand a fact. The poorest person in our grey moors can keep a fact in his memory, and feel its influence on his heart; but he cannot discuss analogies. When we ourselves are sinking to our rest on a dying bed, we can easily grasp a fact, while we cannot entertain and analyze illustrations and analogies. Dr. Arnold, that great scholar, and, with all his errors, that great Christian, says, "Nothing afforded us so much comfort, when shrinking from the outward accompaniments of death—the grave, the clothes, the loneliness—as the thought that these had been around our Lord and Master, around the body of him that died and is alive for evermore."

It is thus that we anticipate, on the clearest

evidence, this blessed fact, that we shall rise again. Then, let us bear patiently with the calamities around us, and seek to alleviate them by such hopes; let us pray for an increase of the first-fruits of the Spirit—greater increase than we have yet attained; and wait in patience for the resurrection, that is to say, the redemption of the body. How should we long for it if we knew and felt what it is! No disease, nor tears, nor death, nor hostile elements are there; no shadow, no biting, piercing cold, nor scorching suns; but perfect physical beauty, perfect moral repose. I am one of those who believe, that this earth will be a part of the abode of the happy for ever. Why should it not? I do not like the idea of consigning to the devil this globe, in which there is so much that is beautiful, though there be very much marred and sinful. Why should it be consigned to him? There is nothing inseparably sinful in stone; there is nothing necessarily wicked in trees; there is nothing horrible in bright flowers, in beautiful stars, and in all that is around us. The Bible does not say earth will not be delivered. I believe it will; and that just as our souls shall be rescued from the bodies that now

cover them, and in which they groan, and shall be introduced into bodies, elevated, purified, sublimed, ennobled, so this creation, now groaning and travailing, shall be emancipated from its present diseased, marred, and cursed frameworks, put on its new vestments, assume its real grandeur, and be a bright and blessed nook of that bright and blessed world in which there shall be happiness and joy for ever and ever.

Reader, is this your hope? Have you any sympathy with these things? A day comes when all that is in the world will look pale indeed. Your wealth, your talents, your wisdom, your power, however beautiful, and proper, and useful now, are but the shadows; the substance is in the future. Then, I ask you, Are you Christians? I ask you so, because I wish you to be happy now; I wish every Sunday to be to you an Easter Sunday; I wish every day you spend to be gilded and gladdened by a sense of righteousness; I wish to see all elevated to the highest Christianity—they will then be elevated to the highest happiness. Are you partakers of the Spirit? Are you born again?—not baptised only, but regenerated by the Spirit of God renewing your hearts?

Are you resting on the blood of Jesus? Do you love the Bible? Do you love to hear what will make you holier, and happier, and better? And do you long, amid the travail of the week, for the rest of the Sabbath, as a forelight of that future rest that remaineth for the people of God—a fore-token, too, of the coming deliverance of earth from its bondage, and humanity from its sins and sorrows?

CHAPTER VII.

PRESENT SUFFERING AND FUTURE GLORY.

"The path of sorrow, and that path alone,
Leads to the land where sorrow is unknown."

"For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us."—Rom. viii. 18.

I have endeavoured to render more audible and clear that welcome voice, "There remaineth a rest for the people of God." I have endeavoured shortly to describe some of the characteristic features of that rest. I now consider "the glory to be revealed" as not the least comprehensive character of the rest that remaineth for the people of God. To these words, not omitting the previous suffering, I will especially direct your attention.

We have, first, the present state of the people of God,—"sufferings"—"the sufferings of this

present life;" and we have next, the future happiness of the people of God,—"the glory that is to be revealed." Human nature, like the sons of Zebedee, would like to enjoy the last; but it would wish to be absolved from the first. This cannot be. The law of the present dispensation is, "In the world ye shall have tribulation." The law of the future dispensation is, "a rest for the people of God." The world's doom is, "Woe unto you that laugh now, for ye shall weep." The Christian's destiny is, "Blessed are ye that weep now, for ye shall be comforted." Paul had experience of both stages: he had tasted of the sufferings of this present life; and he had seen what few besides have—"the glory that is to be revealed." It is after his realisation of both that he says, not merely as an inspired writer, but as one who had made the experiment, and was competent to pronounce a verdict—"I reckon," he says—I make the calculation—"that the sufferings of this present life are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed in us."

It may, indeed, be asked, in what respect Paul had any special experience of the suffer-

ings of life. Every possessor of the present life is apt to say, in the midst of his sufferings—"Ah! my sufferings have no parallel; my trials have never been equalled: they are peculiar, poignant, singularly and exclusively so." Can any sufferings that we are called upon to bear, or that we have borne, be, for one moment, compared with the sufferings of him whose history is depicted, not by himself only, but by the pen of those who witnessed his trials? He had sufferings of all sorts. He tells us he was in cold, in hunger, in nakedness, in fastings, beaten with stripes, in prison, in perils of all kinds. He endured and suffered these things in all places, for he was in peril by sea and on land, in the city, in the desert, in the country. And he received his afflictions from all sorts of persons—Jews and Gentiles, open foes and professing friends. His sufferings, as delineated by himself, and recorded by those who witnessed them, seem to have been sufferings almost unparalleled in multitude and intensity. It is abundantly plain, that it was no person who had been educated on a soft lawn, but on a battle-field, that makes the calculation here; no one who had been clothed from his youth in

fine apparel, and brought up in kings' palaces, who institutes the contrast, but one who had drunk the cup of sorrow to the dregs, who had endured an amount of persecutions of no ordinary intensity, as minutely related by himself and by those who were eye-witnesses, both inspired by the Holy Spirit of God.

He had privileges, also, such as few besides had. He had the earnest of that "glory that is to be revealed," in his heart, which every Christian tastes, "Christ in you the hope of glory." So far he shared with every believer; for the man who has not a foretaste of heaven, will never, in all probability, have the full taste of it; the man who has not heaven, in some measure in him now, has no reason to expect that he will be in heaven hereafter. Heaven begins in the individual heart, and grows in intensity and joy till the individual heart is merged in the glory to come. But the Apostle, in addition to this earnest of heaven, records that he was taken up into the third heaven; that he was received into Paradise, and that he there witnessed scenes so splendid that human tongue faltered when it attempted to delineate them; that he breathed an air, beheld a sun-

shine, and was baptised into a glory so effulgent, so overwhelming, that it was impossible for him, the eloquent, the gifted Paul, to give expression to what he heard and saw. He had travelled from Jerusalem to Rome, a sufferer; he had travelled from earth to heaven, witnessing glory rising upon glory, till at last his great mind was too small to comprehend it, and his eloquent tongue unable to express it. If any man, then, was able to make the calculation with mathematical precision, and from personal experience, it was he who so suffered, and was so favoured.

He says: "I reckon that the sufferings of this present world are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed in us." And this sentiment, on which I am founding my remarks, is not an isolated one: the Apostle embodies the same sentiment in perhaps yet stronger language when he says, in his 2nd Epistle to the Corinthians: "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment." How remarkable the contrasting words—"Our *light* affliction!" Words uttered by him that was in peril by land, in peril by sea, scourged, beaten, stoned, imprisoned, cast to the wild beasts;

suffering from false brethren, false professors; who had been grieved and vexed beyond all description: besides the recollection of his own past life;—*he says:* "Our *light* affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." Let us study the force of the contrast: *light* affliction—a *weight* of glory: light affliction *for a moment*—an *eternal* weight of glory." And that "light affliction, which is but for a moment," is not sent to punish us, but to work out in us and for us "an eternal weight of glory." How significant and instructive are these words!

Very expressive is the name which is here given to that rest that remains for us, and which I have endeavoured to delineate, the "glory that *is to be* revealed." At present, as I shall show, we have but a few scattered beams of it falling into the darkened chambers of our minds; but afterwards the veil shall be lifted away; the dark curtain shall be drawn aside; and in that "rest that remaineth for the people of God," there shall be revealed to us a glory that will make us wonder we did not oftener wish to be there, and wonder more that we were at the trouble of complaining of a thorn

in the foot when boundless acres of boundless grandeur were so soon to be our happy walk.

But let us inquire how, and in what respects, this glory shall be revealed. Glory, in the Bible, means the revelation of something splendidly great; its means intenser light cast upon an excellent object, so that that object shall be more clearly seen. For instance, when the Bible speaks of giving God glory, it means making God known. An infinitely excellent being needs but to be known, to be seen to be glorious; and the more clearly he is known, the more glorious he seems. Man is so imperfect that he needs to hide himself to seem great; hence, the nearer a man is to you, the less great he seems, and the more you know him, even the best and most gifted, the less impressive he will appear. But the more that you know of God and of things eternal, the more glorious, the more attractive they will appear, and the more they will raise your conceptions of the grandeur of him who is enthroned upon the very riches of the universe, and is all-glorious.

The glory that is to be revealed will be a glory revealed from creation; it will be a glory

revealed in Providence, in our retrospect of Providence; and it will be a glory revealed in Redemption. There will be successive stages of it, as the late excellent and devoted Mr. Bickersteth said, whose loss, whose great loss, at this moment so large a section of the church deplores—a loss which it is supposed was partly occasioned by the painful conflict in his mind respecting the issues of that controversy which, I thank God, has been decided as he would have wished, and so far in favour of Evangelical religion—a decision which shows that the great danger in the present day is from the priest and not from the state. His mind was so harassed by anxiety in this matter, that it is said to have been one means of precipitating that which all so unfeignedly and so deeply deplore. What joy would it have been to that noble-minded, catholic man, if he had heard the decision which has been given! He knows the falsity of the contrary view now, because he is in that glory "the successive stages" of which (to use his own language) he endeavoured to delineate, the full enjoyment of which he so ardently hoped for.

Though I cannot take all Mr. Bickersteth's

stages, I may refer to two or three: the glory that will be seen in creation; the glory that we shall see in a retrospect of Providence; and the glory that shall be revealed in looking at Redemption.

Creation, I need not add, is now blotted, marred, injured. The mirror which once reflected God's glory is darkened; and we cannot see it as it was seen, still less as it one day will be seen. Men speak of creation being quite sufficient for them, without revelation. There cannot be a greater misapprehension, for what does creation show? Much of God's goodness, I admit; but it shows also much of his anger or his judgment. I gaze at the lark rising upon its untiring wing, and singing in the sunshine so musically and so joyfully, and I say, "How good must be the God that made that merry bird!" But I watch five minutes longer, and a hawk comes down upon it with the speed of the lightning, tears it to pieces, and feeds upon its warm blood; and then I must say, to be consistent, "How offended must that God be so to make his creatures!" The inference I am compelled to draw is, I know not whether he is the good God that the rising and joyful

lark seems to indicate, or the offended God that this violent assault upon that symbol of joy seems now to betoken. Thus, creation gives conflicting views of what God is; and I cannot have confidence or rest in it as it now is. But when the glory shall be revealed on it, then all nature shall be changed, all creation repaired, renovated, and restored. We shall see the footprints of God everywhere, the handiwork of God in everything. We shall see his smile in the sunbeam, his beauty in the rainbow, his greatness in the expanse of the firmament strewn with stars, his goodness in the texture of all, and his presence and his power upholding all. The cloud that now covers creation shall be withdrawn; the glass through which we now see so darkly shall be broken; and whatever the microscope now discovers in the depths, and whatever the telescope discovers in the heights, shall be brought within the horizon of those whose privilege it is to be in the glory that shall be revealed. All sounds then shall be harmony, and all sights shall be beauty; the very universe itself shall be a grand and a glorious hymn, and stars and flowers the words in which it is written; a perpetual morn shall

shine upon all things, and no mist or exhalation shall darken it for ever—the universe will be a grand temple. There is no temple there, for God is its temple; its floor, the emerald; its dome, the sapphire; its altar, the son of God. All things were very good once; all things shall be very good again. "Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir-tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle-tree;" and nature shall be a portrait of all that God is—as beautiful, complete, and expressive, as any portion of the Bible itself.

But this glory that is to be revealed, will also be revealed in Providence. I have no doubt that part of the occupation of saints in happiness, will be that of taking a retrospect of all the way that God led them. At present our whole life is an inexplicable web; it is tangled, confused, apparently conflicting, always inexplicable in its deepest movements, indicating only the issue; but when we shall take a retrospect of all the way that God has led us, from some lofty pinnacle or eminence in the better land, how changed will things appear then from what they are now! What we now call great and splendid will then be seen to have been but

an exquisitely gilded toy; what the world thinks now so mean will then appear clothed in its great magnificence. Many a grand cathedral that the world admires now, will then be seen to have been but a mausoleum of the dead; and many a little church and humble chapel that the world despises now, will then be seen to have been a birthplace of the living, and a nursery of saints for God. Spots that are now the shrines of the grandest recollections—days that are now anniversaries of great events, seen from "the glory to be revealed," will lose all their beauty: and obscure dwellings, and by-streets, and hidden lanes, where saints have been born, where the cross has been meekly endured, where the battle of life has been heroically fought, and where the victory has been gained, though unproclaimed, will ever be radiant spots throughout the ages of eternity, nor lose their interest even in that resplendent glory that is to be revealed. That persecution which we once so lamented, will then be seen to have chased many a soul to heaven, to have illustrated the principles for which the martyrs suffered, and to have made them spread the wider and grow more popular. That sickness, so severe, so pro-

tracted, which we thought to be an essential calamity, and concerning which we often prayed, —"Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me,"—that sickness of which we could not understand the why, the wherefore, the beginning, or the end; the object of which we could not explain, will then be revealed to have been as necessary to our salvation as that Christ should have died upon the cross for us. It will be found not to have been chance, but the mission of God; not to have been penal—or a judge punishing a culprit—but paternal, a Father chastening a son. At that day, too, that bitter bereavement, that severe loss that darkened the home that was bright—the very recollection of which lies like an avalanche upon the heart, that breaks under the sense of it—will then be seen to have been meant to be one tie less to knit us to this world, and one tie additional to attract us to that better world. We shall find, what we even see now, that there was mercy in gradually loosening the tree that it might fall gently and beautifully ere it was transplanted to a balmier clime, that thus it might be spared the necessity of being torn up by the roots violently and by force.

In this glory that is to be revealed, too, we shall discover that those we thought to be lost, were not lost, but had only the privilege of earlier reaching home, and of preceding us to the glory that is to be revealed. The babe on whose beautiful brow you gazed, and whose loss you grieved over—the friend with whom you took sweet counsel and walked to the house of God—the revered and venerable parent whose loss you lamented and grieved over upon earth, you will then wonder that you were so left to yourselves as to lament for a moment; for if lamentation were needed, it was for those that were left, not for those who were gone. They will then appear in redemption-robes—glorious groups—a blessed vision, standing on the shores of that everlasting sea, with palms in their hands, and singing the triumphant song of Moses and the Lamb. What an illuminated expanse will the past be!—all the ways along which Providence led us—luminous in the glory that is to be revealed! Heroes, philosophers, statesmen, poets, tradesmen, merchants, senators, we shall there discover, were all busy doing their own work, promoting their own designs; but really, without one single exception, intended

or unintended, they were doing the will of God. God in history will be the subject of our retrospect in the past: we shall see him in its rills, its rivulets, its torrents, its cataracts, superintending the least, and controlling the greatest. There will be in that retrospect no chapter without God—no episode visible in which there is not God. We shall see that what we called chances, changes, accidents, vicissitudes, were all under the touch, and responding to the will of God, from the fall of a sparrow to the deposition of a monarch; from the chirp of the grasshopper to the shout of a nation. We shall see that God was in all, bringing good out of evil, glory to himself, and happiness to them that were his—that there are no such things as fortuitous accidents and that there never were, but that each event had its mission, each century its duty; and the very bitterest stream that poured into our cup, or the strongest one that carried away like a torrent those we loved or the property we valued, we shall discover, to our delight and surprise, to have been indeed as bitter, as devastating, whilst it rushed by, as we felt it, but yet to have come direct from the fountain of mercy and goodness—the bosom of

our Father and our God. It is thus, then, that, in that glory to be revealed, creation will appear so expressive, Providence so harmonious, and we shall only wonder that we ever saw it without God, or ever looked at it in any other light.

But this glory will be revealed more prominently in the Gospel of Christ. This is the third and grandest stage of all. When we look into the Book of Revelation we find that the Lamb is in the midst of the hundred and forty and four thousand; that "a Lamb, as it had been slain," is the object of the adoration of heaven. I think it is one of the most striking proofs of the inexhaustible grandeur of the Atonement, that heaven's highest glory is never without it. Christ slain is the vision of heaven —the burden of the songs of the redeemed, "To him that washed us from our sins in his own blood." And if Christ occupy such a place in heaven—such a place in the hearts of its tenantry—wherever and whatever that heaven may be—ought he not to occupy a greater and more glorious place in the hearts of us sinners? In that glory that is to be revealed, we shall see what greatness, goodness, love, mercy, truth, have been manifested and harmonised in that

great fact, the incarnation and the sacrifice of Jesus.

We shall then apprehend more fully the love of God. How often, and how carelessly, do we repeat those grand words—words that have no parallel in the language of man: "God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life!" Weigh this truth; it will bear to be analysed,—to be dwelt upon,—to be minutely examined; it ought to be cherished in the heart; it ought to be the deepest and the dearest truth that humanity retains. "God so loved the world that he gave"—not merely permitted—"his only son." Nothing less than an infinite sacrifice would express His love; nothing less than an infinite sufferer could be the channel for its egress; nothing less than the death and sacrifice of Jesus, the only-begotten Son of God, could either recover us, or express God's great love to us. We shall then see the height, and depth, and length, and breadth of the love of God, which now we so dimly and inadequately comprehend. We shall see that that love is so great that it has placed us, not only beyond

the penalties of law, but in the sunshine of adoption itself; that it has not only introduced us to a Legislator acquitting us, but to a Father welcoming and cordially embracing us. And I am sure, if there be shame in heaven, the shame and confusion of face will be that we read words descriptive of God's love, and of the Saviour's sufferings, enough to electrify the whole universe, and that they passed through our hearts so often, scarcely leaving an impression or an echo behind them. If this be true, that God so loved us—if it be true that God in our nature died for us, then I do say that the response we give to it in our deepest fervour is most inadequate, yea, criminal, and unjust.

But not only shall we see in that glory to be revealed, God's great love, but we shall see, too, all his attributes harmonised in the recovery of the sinner, clearly as we have never seen them before. Power, and goodness, and truth, and wisdom, are manifest in creation, and we shall see that it is so; they are manifest in Providence, and we shall see it to be so; but they are eminently, singularly, gloriously manifest in the atonement of Christ Jesus; sin punished, yet the sinner saved; the law magnified,

and yet the breaker of that law admitted into heaven; God just, and yet justifying the sinner who believes in Jesus; God true to his threatening—"The soul that sinneth, it shall die"—and yet the soul that sins admitted into heaven! What a cluster of wonders! And how glorious will all these facts and phenomena be when they lie, not in the cold and misty light of this world's unbelief, but in the clear and warm light of that glory that is to be revealed!

Then, too, shall we see the results of this cross in a way in which we never saw them before. The least of them is death itself destroyed. Death we shrink from, instinctively and naturally: for, we were never made to die. God made us to live; man made himself to die. But, through the grace of him who did not make man to die, and in spite of the sin of him who made himself to die, that death which we dread is even now seen to be altogether altered; it has become now a reclaimed servant. Christ has taken Death into his service, and has deprived him of his sting, his venom, and his wrath: and he is now the friend and the missionary of the Lord of glory. He is merely a gatherer of flowers for Paradise:—

'Who gazes at the flower with tearful eyes,
Who kisses their drooping leaves.
'Tis for the Lord of Paradise,
He binds them in his sheaves.

"Oh! not in cruelty, not in wrath,
The reaper came that day—
'Twas an angel visited the earth
And took the flowers away."

More than this, Jesus has abolished death. A Christian does not die; the continuity of a Christian's life is not even suspended by death. To a Christian, death is merely undressing—it is his laying aside the garments of mortality, and entering into the presence-chamber, there to wait till that garment of immortality shall, by the resurrection trump, rising in more than its Eden beauty, be restored to the inhabitant that waits for it; that soul and body may ever be in the glory that is to be revealed. And when that glory is revealed, graves which have scarred the earth shall be extinguished; Satan shall be bound with chains, and cast into the outer depths of the universe, a sufferer for ever; and the end of creation, the end of Providence, the end of redemption, will be glory to God in the highest; on earth, in all its animal, intellectual, moral, spiritual, and physical economy, peace and good-will, to the

highest and intensest degree, seen to have been expressed to all mankind. How blessed then will all things be when this glory shall be revealed! The earth, that has groaned and travailed so long in pain, shall then come to the birth. What is "nature," or *Natura* (from *nascor*) about to bring forth. "Nature groans and travails in pain, soon to give birth to a new heaven and new earth, waiting for what? "The manifestation of the sons of God." A baptismal flood of fire, we are told, shall purify it; a new and nobler genesis shall pass upon it; Christ's own benediction, when he comes forth from the Holy place, where the High Priest now is, shall be pronounced; and that benediction shall go down to nature's depths, and rise to nature's heights; and the earth shall yield her increase, for God, our God, shall bless us, and all the ends of the earth shall praise him. Nature will then lay aside her ashen garments, and put on her Easter robes, and there shall be no more tears, nor weeping, nor sorrow, but an everlasting Sabbath, a ceaseless jubilee; and the 21st and 22nd chapters of Revelation, which are now in print, shall then be actual, and in fact. There shall

oe no more night, and the nations of them that are saved shall walk in the light of it; the gates shall not be shut; they shall see His face; there shall be no need of candles, nor light of the sun, for the Lord God Almighty giveth them light, and they shall reign for ever and for ever.

Such is a faint, twilight ray of the glory that is to be revealed. But why do I describe this future? Because man lives instinctively in the future. There is no one who is not living in the future, expecting from to-morrow that which he fails to draw from to-day. There is no one who does not feel that his happiness is yet to be. Each admits it is not yet, but each hopes it is to be. If men will only let their hopes stretch beyond the horizon which bounds this world, into that brighter world where the glory is to be revealed, then their hopes and expectations will be found just and true and precious. But the reason why I try to delineate this future rest—this glory to be revealed, is, because, when the higher light comes into one's mind, it will extinguish the lower; when the higher preference takes possession of the heart it will dislodge the lower preference; and just

in proportion as the rays from the future glory dawn upon us will the little twinkling tapers and glow-worms of present glory fade and disappear. I might, in order to lead men to accept the gospel, speak to them of the archangel's trump, and of the coming judgment, when the notes of that trump shall be as the reverberations of an earthquake shaking sea and land. I might picture to the reader each risen lost one, crowding, with pale face, and throbbing heart, to the judgment-seat, so immersed in the shadow of his approaching doom, as to be unable to hear the crash or witness the spectacle of a dissolving world. I might figure the Judge upon the great white throne; I might repeat the last dread sentence, "Depart from me, ye cursed." But it seems to me that these are God's "strange things," and that his grand design is to win by love, rather than drive by terror; to draw from the lesser to a lovlier beauty; to lead us from being satisfied with the cistern, to seek after the fountain; to draw from the things that perish in the using, to that glory which is to be revealed in us, and which endures for ever and ever. Very true it is, I can describe it but imper-

fectly; and yet one feels satisfaction in this—for one's own imperfection is here so far satisfactory—that it is impossible to exaggerate the glory that is to be revealed. I may come short, and must come short; but exaggerate, poet, painter, or preacher, never can. "Now we see," says the apostle, "through a glass darkly." We have but a faint apprehension of it; and I am certain, from the glimpses that are occasionally given, that if we had a clearer apprehension of it, we should say with the Psalmist oftener, who said it from a throne-top: "Oh that I had wings like a dove! for then would I fly away, and be at rest."

But, after all, we know very little of this world. How, then, can we expect to know much of that future world? There is scarcely a fact with which you come into contact that is not more or less an inexplicable mystery to us. How is it, for instance, that the rose-tree growing up the walls of our house, covered with its fragrant and its beautiful flowers, no sooner hears the autumn wind begin to chant its vesper song, than it drops its leaves—parts with its beautiful flowers—gathers in all its vital forces—somewhat like a gallant ship

preparing for a storm, by taking in canvas,—and thus seems to make ready for the coming winter? The very bird,—the irrational bird —in that rose-tree seems to hear its warning too; for it takes its flight to a sunnier clime and a milder air. How do we explain this? Why is it that even dumb nature—the material and animal creation—thus knows things that man himself but imperfectly comprehends? In leaf and feather, moss and fern, are wrapt up mysteries that man cannot unravel. If, then, we have but so faint glimpses of mysteries in the world about us, we can have, at best, but a dim glimpse of the future that is to be revealed.

I have thus looked at the glory which is the coming destiny of the people of God: let me now very briefly allude to the present sufferings which the Apostle says are not worthy to be compared with it. In what respects are present sufferings not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed?

In the first place, the sufferings of a Christian never can touch the highest point of his nature. A Christian never can know what it is to have corrosion of mind,—agony of con-

science,—remorse. All the pain or suffering a Christian man can feel,—bereavement, loss, sickness, or disease,—must be outer. But the glory that is to be revealed, the happiness that awaits us, fills the inner and highest portion of the man. The soul is the recipient; and therefore sufferings which do not reach the soul are not worthy to be compared with the happiness which shall penetrate and overflow the soul, and constitute the highest joy in the highest portion of man's nature.

In the second place, our present sufferings, whatever they be, are not always. Our life is light and shadow, cloud and sunshine; tears in the evening, while joy cometh in the morning. But, in that better life, the joy with which our present sufferings are contrasted, is permanent, unsuspended, and without end. The river flows for ever, the tree grows for ever, and the glory shines for ever; and therefore sufferings that are only occasional, are not worthy to be compared with a glory that will be perpetual.

In the next place, in our severest sufferings in this life there are compensatory elements. God "stays his rough wind in the day of his east wind." In sickness of body we have

sanctification of heart; in pain of the outer man we have great peace in the inner man; if we lose a child or a relative, we feel he is not lost—he is only gone before. Thus, our sufferings in this life, even when greatest, have interwoven with their texture, and intermingled with their current, and ever bubbling up from its depth, constant compensatory joys; but, in the life to come, our joy will have nothing to interfere with it: it will be undiluted, unmingled ecstasy, perpetual happiness, unclouded joy. Hence, sufferings which are intermingled with compensatory and neutralising elements, are not worthy to be compared with joy in which there shall be no intrusive sorrow—which shall be perfect and everlasting.

Our present sufferings, even when worst, never exceed the strength of our powers of endurance. Beyond a certain pitch, suffering ends in death or in insensibility; but, in the world that is to come, our capacities shall be infinitely enlarged, our susceptibilities of bliss made infinitely sensitive, and the joy that we shall experience shall rise to the measure of the great capacities that God will give us. Therefore, in this life, our sufferings, which do

not fill our present capacity of suffering, are not worthy to be compared with a joy which shall fill our enlarged capacities of joy and pleasure in the life to come.

And, lastly, our present sufferings are but temporary; but the glory to be revealed is eternal. The finite cannot be compared with the infinite; the temporary is not worthy to be counted with the eternal; and well, therefore, did the Apostle conclude, for reasons that lie deep in the nature of the suffering, and clear and luminous upon the face of the glory, "I reckon that the sufferings of this present life are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed in us." Thus, my dear reader, the rough and stormy voyage will soon be over to the youngest, and the haven of perpetual rest will open its bright bosom to us all; the flinty road will soon be traversed; and the happy home, whose majestic glory wears a home-like aspect, because of the near and the dear ones that have peopled it before us, will soon encompass us. Let us live in the future; draw from it compensatory elements; enjoy a foretaste of the glory before it comes. There will be a vast multitude there. "I beheld,"

says the seer, in that beautiful Revelation, "and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands." "These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple; and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of water: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." Once they were afflicted, as some of us may be,—now they are happy; once in goat-skins and sheep-skins,—now in a state of purity, for they are white; once they were struggling in conflict,—now they are victorious in battle.

To sum up all I have said, in the words of Robert Hall: "How should we rejoice in the prospect, certainty rather, of spending a blissful

eternity with those whom we loved on earth; of seeing them emerge from the ruins of the tomb, and the deeper ruins of the fall, not only uninjured, but refined and perfected, with every tear wiped from their eyes, standing before the throne of God and the Lamb, in white robes, with palms in their hands, crying with a loud voice, 'Salvation to our God, and to the Lamb, for ever!' What delight will it afford to renew the sweet counsel we have taken together, to recount the toils of the combat, the labour of the way, and to approach, not the house, but the throne of God, in company, in order to join in the symphonies of heavenly voices, and lose ourselves amidst the fruition of the beatific vision! To that state all the pious on earth are tending. Heaven is taking to itself whatever is congenial to its nature, is enriching itself with the spoils of the earth, collecting within its capacious bosom whatever is pure, permanent, divine, leaving nothing for the last fire to consume but the objects and the slaves of concupiscence; while everything which grace has prepared and beautified shall be selected from the ruins of the world, to adorn that eternal city which hath no need of the sun nor of

the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof."

In closing my remarks upon this passage, let me ask the reader to remember, that the glory that is to be revealed is for those who have the characteristics of the eighth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans. Are we, then, in Christ? Do we walk after the spirit, and not after the flesh? Are we spiritually minded? Is Christ in us? for, "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." Are we led by the Spirit? Do we say, "Abba, Father?" Do we suffer with Christ? for then only shall we reign with Christ. Are we, in one word, Christians? I do not mean, to ask you, reader, Are you baptized? I have no doubt of that. I do not mean, Do you come to the Lord's table? I do not inquire, Do you observe the Sabbath? But are you something more than all this? Is your heart changed? Are your treasure and your heart where Christ is? If Christianity had never been, would you have just been the same? Suppose, dear reader, you had never seen the Bible—or heard the Gospel, would you have been as you now are? If so,

the Gospel has done nothing for you; you have not received any advantage; you have incurred a load of heavy responsibility, which you will have to discharge in the sight of Him to whom all hearts are open, and from whom no secrets are hid. If this Gospel has not given a new tone to your character, a new elevation to your hopes, a new refinement to your taste—new sympathies, and new motives, it has failed, or rather you are not benefited. To be a Christian is not to subscribe a creed, or to chant a prayer, or to sing a hymn, or to come to the Lord's table; it is to be changed in heart and nature; so that in all places, in all companies, in all employments, in all disputes, in all debates, in all undertakings, the glory of Christ,—the safety of souls,—the highest present and eternal happiness of man, shall be your chief aim, and God's word shall be your conclusive directory. Hearing a sermon is of no more merit than kissing a cross, or kneeling at an altar, or sharing in a splendid ceremony. Our work begins when the address of the preacher closes. It is meant that what we hear in the sanctuary, we would take home to our hearts and consciences.

and either reject or accept it. It is the bitterest mockery to come instantly to the house of God, to hear faithful sermons, join in evangelical prayers, and afterwards go home with no real or permanent influence on the heart, no change of course, of character, of conduct, of views, of thoughts, of affection, of love. To come to the house of God is not so much duty as precious privilege. To hear the sermon is not the end of our coming to the house of God; it is to receive instruction, impulse, motive, hope, so real, that all will help to make the week-day toils more holy, and the week-day heart more happy. Let no one say, "We are so busy in the world that we cannot take up seriously the affairs of our souls." Want of time, in this matter, never can be an excuse. God has placed us here for one grand purpose,—to ripen for eternity. If in travelling to a distant spot we spend the whole day in gathering flowers, till night come upon us when we can no longer travail, the guilt is entirely our own. To be rich is not necessary, to be great is not necessary, to be celebrated is not necessary; but to be Christian is necessary. All else can be

dispensed with, except an answer to this question: "What must I do to be saved?" And until that question is settled, and settled in the very depths of our hearts, and in the light of God's countenance, all our religion is but a mockery, a delusion, and a snare. I ask you, reader, Are you a Christian? Are you in heart and conscience, a child of God? Are you living as such, sacrificing as such, counting your present sufferings, if you suffer, not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed? If you are resting on the Crucified for acceptance, looking to the Glorified for happiness, then the eyes that now see through a glass dimly, shall soon see face to face; those hands that hold tremblingly the cup of sorrow, will soon wave the palm; those heads that are bowed down beneath a burden of care shall be encircled with everlasting garlands; and those sad voices that have often been heard in the night in agony: "Wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from this body of death?" will yet be heard again, saying: "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and

priests unto God and his Father, to him be glory and dominion for ever."

"Art is long and time is fleeting,
And our hearts, though stout and brave,
Still, like muffled drums, are beating
Funeral marches to the grave.
Let us, then, be up and doing,
With a heart for any fate,—
Still achieving, still pursuing,
Learn to labour and to wait."

CHAPTER VIII.

REMAINING DUTIES.

"O'er life's humblest duties throwing
Light the earthling never knew,
Freshening all its dark waste places,
As with Hermon's dew."

"But this I say, brethren, the time is short: it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none; and they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; and they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away."—1 Cor. vii. 29—31.

In this chapter, by the grace and aid of the Spirit of God, without which I must write, and the reader study, without any profit, I would discourse of that enlightened and Christian view which we are here authorised and enjoined to take of the world, especially the slightness of that hold which the cares, the honours, the wealth, the sorrows, and the losses of the world ought to have on every Christian's heart.

The Apos e was dealing with those who had proposed some intricate, circumstantial, and ceremonial questions; and to these he substantially says:—"These questions have their importance. I do not dispute their relative value—matters of discipline, and form, and ceremony have some importance; but if you will only see aright the shortness of time, the instancy of judgment, and the responsibilities crowded into the brief hour that sweeps past with almost lightning speed, you will learn to care less about matters of ecclesiastical arrangement, and to be more anxious about the safety of the soul, the honour of God, the nearing prospects of eternity. In short (says the Apostle) the time is too short for discussing, still less disputing such matters: 'it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none; and they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not.'" Now, I believe that one great reason why the cares, the wealth, the honour, the losses of this present world seem to us so weighty and important is, that we look at them in the light of this world only. If we look at

the stars at night what a splendid Apocalypse is that sky in which so many bright sentinels seem to wait and watch about the throne of Deity! but if we gaze upon the same sky by day, when the sun himself has risen, we shall find that by his splendour he has put out all the stars. If we look at this world's honours, wealth, disputes, in the light of this world, like the stars at night, they are alone prominent, brilliant, and attractive; but if we only lift the curtain that keeps off eternity, and let even some stray and straggling beams of that eternal light upon this world's cares, wealth, honour, losses, anxieties, they will all be shrivelled into little space, and look pale and dim in the greater splendour of eternal and endless day. It is so, and in the same degree, with the pains and losses as well as the gains of time;—of the former we shall be taught to say, if we see them in the light of eternity:—"Our light affliction, which is but for a season, worketh for us a far more exceeding, even an eternal weight of glory."

That time is short is one of the most common and popular aphorisms of every day. Every man admits it; and every man exclaims,

as we meet him in the intercourse of society, "How time runs away." The only strange anomaly, and this not a rare one, is that class of people that are always trying to kill time, as if it did not die of itself fast enough. They cannot get it off their hands; they call themselves at their own disposal, and they speak of their time being at their own disposal; but really they seem to me to be at the disposal of time, and of every stray and accidental occurrence that drifts towards them in the world and carries them with it. That time is short everybody feels, but nobody as he ought. This is evidence of the state in which we all are. It is not a new truth that we need, but a deeper impression of the old one. Hence one of the great functions of the pulpit is not so much to provide new truths, as to try and put the old ones at that angle and in that light, that they shall be felt to strike and leave impressions permanent as life, and precious as the rewards of eternity itself. Christianity in the head is the condition of almost every one now. Christianity in the heart is the rare possession of the people of God. Christianity in the outer porch is one thing, and in its place a good thing;

but it is Christianity in the heart—even the holy chancel—the sacred place within—that is salvation to him that knows it, and proof of the true influence that that Christianity was meant to exert. "The time, then," says the Apostle, "is short." Every swing of the pendulum is the signal for a soul's passage to the judgment-seat of God. What a solemn fact is it, that when the mortality is at its ordinary rate, about six persons die every hour in this great metropolis! We meet in the sanctuary each Sunday at eleven, and before we retire nearly twelve persons in the metropolis will have passed to the judgment-seat. What a plea for prayer, that they that live may live in the Lord, and they that die, die in the Lord! The time of life, I repeat, is short,—very short, and, by a strange experience, that all are perfectly conscious of the nearer we approach the close of life, if we live to its utmost limit, the more rapidly life runs on. Have we not often noticed that a year at twenty seems exceedingly long? at the age of thirty one year is equal to about ten months; at forty a year is equal to about eight months; at fifty to about seven months; about sixty it comes down to about

five months. People remark every day, "How fast the Christmases come round! How rapidly the years rush away!" The golden visions of youth soon become dim; the broad space and the bright prospects become narrower; and every old man sees the horizon shutting down around him, till the diameter of that horizon seems only the length and breadth of that grave that he must soon occupy. True, poets may gild the experience of humanity with beauty, but the fact itself teaches us searching and solemn lessons. One of the most beautiful and classic poets in our language has tried thus to explain the fact, that years seem shorter as we grow older. In exquisite poetry, and as true as it is poetic, he says:—

"The more we live more brief appear
Our life's succeeding stages;
A day to childhood seems a year,
And years like passing ages.

"When joys have lost their bloom and breath,
And life itself is vapid,

[which last is not a Scriptural remark]

Why, as we reach the falls of death,
Feel we its tide more rapid?

"Heaven gives our years a fading strength,
Indemnifying fleetness,
And gives to youth a seeming length
Proportion'd to their sweetness."

Whatever be the value of some of the thoughts in this beautiful explanation, it admits the great fact we all feel, that life is short if it reach its utmost limits, and that the sands run faster the nearer they are run out. The time of life, then, I say is short. If it were true that all reach seventy, eighty, or ninety years of age, it would be short even then; but the few, not the many, reach so protracted a period. What home has not evidences of this? What parent has not facts in his domestic experience that attest the precariousness of the dearest life? What burial-ground has not graves a few inches as well as a few feet long? What, and how frequent, evidences have we not that babes—those sparkles, as it were, of life, which this cold world would utterly extinguish—are often caught by that beneficent Father who sent them, and transferred to that more ethereal air in which they shall glow with seraph's fire, and shine with inexhaustible splendour for ever and ever? It seems to me as if God, in taking the infant from the mother's bosom, intends to teach her not only that life is short, but to give that mother a stake and an interest in, and a sympathy with, a better and a brighter world,

to which her babe has preceded her, a happy and a welcome emigrant. In the case of families in which there are many losses, it seems as if God were simply changing the home. Instead of lifting the whole nest, as it were, from the tree where it now is, into that tree of life where it will be, he empties it one by one, and by thus transplanting them he colonises heaven; and leads the lessening number no more to cleave to the earth, as if this earth were home, but increasingly to long for wings like a dove, to flee away, and reach that better home where the others have preceded. Thus, Death, when he comes into the circle of the family, and carries away those flowers that the poet said were no sooner blown than blasted, but which the Christian feels are only transferred to bloom in a better country,—when death comes and gathers, and plants in his bosom those spring-flowers, the babes that we love, he seems to me to lose half his terrors, and to look beautiful, because he carries in his bosom those that are dear to us. At least we feel less afraid and less shrinking to go through the valley of the shadow of death, because that valley, long as it is, is yet fragrant with the

perfume of those that have preceded us. Infants' graves are the footprints of angels; and I feel no hesitation in saying so, because I am one of those who believe that, while half the human family dies in infancy, all children dying in infancy are saved, not because baptised, but because chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world. When a babe is dying, and its friends tell me, "Our babe is dying,—come and baptise it," I do so, and think it very right of them to make the request. But yet I cannot forget, that baptism is designed for the Church militant, not for the Church triumphant. That dying babe has the inner baptism of fitness for heaven, and it has no need of an outer baptism, or introduction into the outer Church, which it shall not live to see, however beautiful and proper it may be to baptise it. Baptism is for the Church militant, and on the supposition that the baptised person is to live; but if evidently dying, the child needs not our baptism. It is thus that we see mercy in the loss of the young; those images that are deposited in the memory of parents as in picture galleries, from which they can never be effaced on earth, are testimonies—living and

eloquent testimonies—that while life is short, if it last till the longest, it is often shorter still. The infant dies, the boy dies, the youth dies; even in the marriage ceremony itself death is spoken of: in every lease that you draw, death is always supposed possible. All things remind us of the uncertainty of life, and everything shows that time is short.

But there is another section of our experience that will prove that time is short, and that is the time of privilege. We forget that, if the young *may* soon die, and the aged *must* ultimately die, that there is a short parenthesis in every man's life during which God speaks to his conscience. If that period be missed or passed by unimproved, God will withdraw and say—"My Spirit will not strive with him any more." We have no right to specify that period in any man's case, or to say, "This is the ultimate possibility of your salvation;" but we know a thousand things may fix that limit; health is precarious, and it may fail; we may be able to hear the church-going bell no more; lunacy may supervene and end our day. One single drop of fluid touching that delicate machinery which men call the brain, can

paralyse every limb, and induce mania of the most hopeless kind. If there be no responsibility where there is lunacy, yet there may have been incurred grievous responsibility,—opportunities lost—mercies despised — long before madness came on. Besides, if we hear the gospel, and still fail to improve what we hear, there may be no further opportunities offered by the Holy Spirit of God. We can scarcely expect that we shall be suffered long to hear messages that ought almost to quicken the dead and to electrify the living, day after day, and Sabbath after Sabbath, while we turn away—one man to his farm and another to his merchandise, and another to his home—careless, unimpressed, and unconcerned. We cannot expect that God will suffer such ungrateful returns, or that his forbearance and patience will last so long. The present moment is the intensest point of human existence; the hour that passes is the pivot on which eternity may revolve. What men are in time, that they are in eternity: generally as men live, so they die: and as men die, so they exist in happiness or in misery for ever and ever. Thus, time is short. That shortness, I may just notice, though I

were to shut the Bible here, would be to me irresistible evidence that this is not the last stage of man's existence. If man is meant to be extinguished the moment that he closes his eyes upon this world, a cruel Being must have made him; for that Being has implanted in his heart, yearnings, instincts, and longings which balk him, and make him more miserable, and inexplicably so, as far as we see. The very shortness of man's life is to me the evidence that we are marching to a future life—that we are speeding on to eternity—and that in a few short years we shall stand at the judgment-seat. And what an array of human countenances will be there!—some radiant with hope, others blank with despair, gazing into that unsounded future, in which, in happiness or in woe, they must live for ever. If this be true—if the dead must rise, if the soul shall live wretched or happy, if the trumpet shall sound, if the bronze, the marble, and the green sod shall equally move aside, and pour up their living tenantry—if all shall stand at the judgment-seat of Christ, to live or die for ever, according to what they have been here, the time is short enough to make ready; it remains that "they that weep, weep

as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not.

Let us now look at the practical results, or remaining duties. The time is short, and the first result should be, that "they that have wives should be as though they had none." "I have married a wife," was the excuse of one for not coming to the great festival that represented the gospel; and we are told again, that "he that loveth father or mother, sister or brother, wife or children, more than me, is not worthy of me." What seems to me very naturally implied in these words is, first, that marriage is honourable in all, priest and people; but the duty that devolves upon all is, that they who marry should be as though they had married not. The minister of the gospel must not say, "I cannot do this or that, because I have a wife and children;" the tradesman must not salve over the dishonesty of which he is consciously guilty, by saying, "I have a wife and family to provide for." The memento to such a one is, that time is short; "they that have wives should be as though they had none." But apart from this we shall find our safety and our success in business are far more allied to

an honest and conscientious discharge of every duty in the sight of God than at first sight may appear. But if it were not so, the wife ought to be an auxiliary, not an obstruction, in our course to glory. If she be otherwise, we must say, "what will it profit a man to gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" It will be no excuse at the judgment-seat, for our losing our souls, that we had each a wife that would not go with us to church, or a husband that would not join us at the communion-table. It will be no excuse at that tribunal before the Almighty, "I was obliged to be dishonest, to be untrue, because I had a wife and family to provide for." I sympathise with the claims of the family: but we are by energy, honesty, industry, and the blessing of God resting upon us—which will not be withheld if we seek it —to provide for them; we may not make them an excuse for that which conscience condemns and God's Word discountenances. But the prescription, "They which have wives be as though they had none," should not make your home more gloomy, or your care for your home less true, or your sympathy with your home less deep; the very contrary. There

is no countenance of asceticism in the gospel of Jesus; it purifies human joys and sanctifies human sorrows. Jesus beautified and made happy by his presence the bridal festival before he sympathised with them that wept the loss of the near and the dear. The first miracle Jesus performed was at a marriage-feast. He heightened, by that blessed example, domestic joy before he went out to alleviate human sorrow; he rejoiced with them that did rejoice in Cana of Galilee, before he went to weep with them that did weep—with the sisters of Bethany over the grave of their beloved Lazaras. The sins of men were heavy upon him; the road before him was rough; the cross was at its end; and yet that blessed Saviour turned aside in his arduous and painful journey in order to make more happy a happy pair; that Christianity might be seen dawning, like the morning light from the mountain-tops, in the quiet joys of a nuptial blessing; and consecrating the purest joy of humanity, it went to sympathise with deep suffering, or to bind up the sorrows of the broken-hearted. To pour new sunshine on earth, as well as to open up the glory that is to be revealed, is the aim of the gospel. It is happy

news, as well as holy news. The Bible is a fit gift at bridals as at burials. The epicurean would say, "Time is short, therefore eat, drink, and be merry; for to-morrow we die." The ascetic would say, "We die; therefore run from the world's duties and responsibilities: get on the top of a pillar, like Simon Stock, or go into a nunnery, and abandon the world altogether." Time is short, says the Gospel; therefore do not say, "I will not marry." Do not marry, and make your home your temple, and your wife the object of worship; but let them "that have wives be as though they had none; and they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not."

Let us next consider other phases of life where Christ is equally precious. The next is:—"And they that weep, as though they wept not." It is natural to feel; it is human to weep—it is Christian also; and in this world countless are the springs of human sorrow and tears. The stoic would say, "You must not weep; for this is the pefection of humanity." The Saviour says we may weep; nay, the Saviour himself wept. I think one of the most eloquent

texts in the Bible is, "Jesus wept." If some one near, dear, and beloved has been borne away from this world to yonder better world, it is not impossible to forbear to weep? If you are called in to comfort some such weeper, say not, in the first instance, "Do not weep;" this is the language of stoicism or of ignorance of human nature. There is a period in human sorrow when the soul needs to be relieved, when grief needs an echo or response, not repression. It is inhuman at such a moment to snow down commonplace maxims, such as "Do not weep." Jesus wept,—humanity must weep; but the regulating principle, the proper course, is, to weep as though we wept not, feeling that there are deeper sorrows, urgent duties, instantly opening to us and devolving upon us. If, then, some dear one has been taken away—if the gem that shone so beautifully by your fireside, and in the rays and sparkles of which you rejoiced so long, has been removed out of sight, and you weep at the recollection, be as though you wept not, when you know that what was a bright gem at your fireside is now fixed, a brighter star in the celestial firmament for ever. If you weep

in such a case, another angel, or the same angel that appeared to Mary, will appear to you at the grave of your beloved dead, and will say, "Weep not; he is not here: he is risen." Beautiful it is, I cannot but remark, that God is making heaven less a strange land to us, and casting over its majestic glories, by the numbers of our relatives he takes there, every day, a more home-like aspect; so that when we follow, and are admitted within its precincts, we shall find friends, and brethren, and children, and fathers, and mothers—all the constituents of faded fire-sides; and it will be only exchanging a cold, bleak, and precarious home for a bright and joyous, even an unchangeable one. And if we only felt more than we do the blessedness of that home that will be, and compared it more than we do with the trials of this home that now is, we should exclaim, as another poet—if you will suffer me to quote one more—has said :—

"How happy
The holy spirits who wander there,
'Mid flowers that never shall fade or fall!
Though mine were the gardens of earth and sea.
Though the stars themselves had flowers for me,
One blossom of Heaven out-blooms them all!

* * * * *

Go ! wing thy flight from star to star,
From world to luminous world, as far
As the universe spreads its flaming wall ;
Take all the pleasures of all the spheres,
And multiply each through endless years,
One minute of Heaven is worth them all ! "

Then let us weep as though we wept not.

But we are also called upon here to rejoice as though we rejoiced not. If it be human to weep, it is no less so to rejoice ; if it be natural to weep, it is natural also to rejoice. There is no more piety in a gloomy face than in a bright one ; indeed, if there be any difference, less in the former, for wherever Christianity makes the heart dilate with its inspiration, the brow will be brightened and smoothed by its influence. But when we rejoice, we are to rejoice, as our Lord tells us, as though we rejoiced not. There is much in this world that ought to cause joy. Joy is to be gathered from literature, from poetry, from music, from painting, from home with its quiet scenes, from the literary world, from national prosperity and social progress ; these are all springs—proper and legitimate springs of joy. Still the joys that come from these are earth-born ; we are only to sip them as with the palm of the hand while we pass

along—we must not tarry to drink deeply of them. We are travellers through a wilderness; we may gather the occasional flower that blooms upon the path, we may enjoy its fragrance, we may taste of the spring which the oasis discloses in order to refresh us; but we are not to sit down—we must hasten onward—looking for a "city that hath foundations," and for "a better country." What is so beautiful as the sky that closes on the earth, and folds it in its embrace? What so fitted to give joy as the first bud of spring, or to compose to solemn thought as the last rose of summer? What more delightful to a sensitive ear than the beautiful melodies, the harmonies, and the varied combinations of music? What a scene —what a birthplace of joys is the fireside! In these things we may rejoice legitimately, truly rejoice. These are ministering angels still;—their ministry is not superseded or arrested by our acceptance of the gospel. But we must still recollect that all these are evanescent—that they are lent only for a moment—that there is not a heart now bounding with joy that will not one day be beating rapidly with fear—that there is not one who reads these pages,

whatever his wealth, his joys, his hopes, who must not lay his head down, and it may be very humbly, upon the last pillow, and gather himself up, and yield up the ghost. The joys of this world are to be tasted in their place—but only sparingly. They must be the refreshments of life, but not its food; they may be the beautiful and adorning fringe, but they must not be the woof and warp of the robe of life. There is something higher, better. We must set our affections not upon things that are below, however joyful or beautiful, but upon things that are above; rejoicing in them as though we rejoiced not.

We must also "buy as though we bought not, and possess as though we possessed not." Christianity in these words admits the distinction of property. Communism is as unchristian as it is absurd. "The poor ye have always with you." The rich are addressed in the New Testament as a class distinct from the poor; there is the same gospel for both; and duties clear and unequivocal devolving on both; and, by a law that God has wrought into the very texture of things, if the poor neglect their duties to the rich, the poor are the first to

suffer; if the rich neglect their duties to the poor, *they* are the first to suffer. No man winds a chain about the hand of his fellow that is not compelled by a necessary law, in God's holy providence, to wind the other end about his own hand. No man pronounces a curse upon his fellow which does not come back to himself in its echo. You cannot harm your neighbour without harming yourself; you cannot connive at your neighbour's low, suffering, sanitary condition, without finding in your own experience that it will tell upon your own health, however rich, great, or apparently remote you may be. The Apostle says, "Let those that buy be as though they bought not." Trade, then, is Christian; the distinction of property is Christian; but property has its duties as well as rights. More than this—trade is holy: the exchange is placed beside the temple; traffic, as it were, is thus consecrated; and you may, therefore, be a tradesman or merchant and yet be a Christian. You are to be a merchant, but a Christian merchant—that is to say, profit and loss are not to be the exclusive or absorbing thoughts or anxieties of your soul. You are not to trade in order to make a fortune

to leave behind you, or, as some foolishly do—to enjoy themselves, as they say, when they retire and get old: than this there is no greater practical blunder; for if you actually live till the age of eighty, and if up to sixty you have spent your time in the hardest drudgery, in order to amass the fortune you now possess, you cannot now enjoy it. You have forgotten that though your means of enjoyment have increased, by the physical law of your nature, as you advance in years, your capacity of enjoyment decreases. Those fruits that were so sweet when you were young, and of which you then thought you could never have enough, and for an accumulation of which you have toiled, and drudged, and laboured, do not taste the same when you become old—not because those fruits have changed their nature, but because you have grown old, and your sensibilities are deadened. Their flavour and beauty are the same—your sensibilities are altered. Therefore, to lay up money in order to enjoy it when you are old is a blunder, in the experience of man; and, in the sight of God, a grievous sin. "Labour not, then, for the meat that perisheth, but for that which endureth unto everlasting life."

Trade, as you traded not; buy, as though you bought not; and sell, as though you sold not. Do these things as duties; take these as refreshments by the way; they are lawful and Christian-like. In them you may glorify God; but you destroy and vitiate all when you make them objects of worship, or the pursuit of them the staple of life.

"Use the world," adds the Apostle, "as not abusing it." Thus the Apostle says, we may have the world's honours, the world's wealth, the world's smile; but then we are not to abuse it, but to use it. We may not debase and prostitute our position to carnal and sensual purposes. We are to use our property, in active beneficence, but not to abuse it, by laying it up to rust; we are set apart to show mankind that we can use our wealth for diffusive good, instead of hoarding it for contingencies that may never occur, or reserving it for persons whose use of it may injure, not bless, themselves and society: let us employ it as a help to a better world, in Christianising, humanising, making happier, all mankind. To abuse it is either to hoard it or to try to have a monopoly of it, or to lay it up for purposes that may

never come, or which may be altogether useless or mischievous. Use it, and it cannot rust; abuse it, and it will be a corroding and destroying curse. A weighty reason for all this is the fact, that "the fashion of this world passeth away." The word used by St. Paul, and in our version translated "fashion," is borrowed from the ancient theatre. The performances were conducted in the open air, and by daylight; there was no roof to the theatre; the actors wore masks, representing the characters which they personated. Now, the Apostle says, this world has its fashions, shape, and peculiar structure, or scheme; and the masks are various. One wears the mask of a king, another that of a noble, another that of a peasant, another that of a mechanic; but underneath all the masks there lies the great common human nature. The Apostle represents all rank and degree, as it were, as a pure conventionalism, not as an absolute, genuine, standing, permanent fact. He describes these as the imagery of a masquerade. All appear different to what they are. By and by, death marches on the stage, takes off each man's mask, shows that the human, sanctified or unsanctified, remains; and leaving

the masks on the floor, he sweeps all that wore them off the stage to the judgment-seat of God, where each man must answer for the part he has played, and how he has played it. Use the world, therefore, "for the fashion of this world passeth away." If I take the allusion in its broader sense, Are not all things passing away? Let any aged man ask himself at this moment, "Where are my early playmates? where the friends of my youth, and the companions of my manhood?"—let any man who has even reached the period of middle life take a retrospect, and see how many that have had as great promise of long years and happy years as he had, are now mingled with the dust. Do not new faces meet you at every corner? Are not new voices heard every Sunday in every psalm that is sung? Does not life become more and more a bundle of broken fibres, one of which drops every day? Is not our existence becoming more and more fragmental? Does it not seem as if, year after year, this world were becoming more a foreign land—that in the midst of the stranger we may long for our Father's house, where our friends and our brethren are? Ties are lessening, flowers are fading, and every day the sky shuts

down over fewer of those we love; and all things tell us that time is short. It remains therefore that those who weep, should be "as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; and they that use the world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away."

Time is far shorter, in every period and moment, than we imagine. Do I address the young? Your time is short—very short—far shorter than you suppose. Youth is a most precious season in the experience of man; let it pass, and it is a period that can never be enjoyed again. I do not say that if youth pass unsanctified, you will not have further opportunities of knowing God; but I do say that this is the time when the seed may be most easily sown, for the heart is now most susceptible; now the seed sown may be longest retained; for the heart of youth is most retentive. Let it pass, and it is passing with the rapidity of a rapid stream falling down between two mountains—like a day between two nights, and you will have no such opportunity again for receiving a new heart, or being impressed with real religion.

I am perhaps addressing in these pages some reader who is now under a deep and solemn impression that time is very short. Such a period does occur in every man's experience, when the glare of the world becomes dim—and the roar of the wheels of the world is for a moment silenced—and when, you know not why, a sort of sad, pensive feeling comes over you; this is a ripple, as it were, of the tides of the great ocean of eternity; it rushes through your heart, to make you pause, and ponder, and think. Let that solemn, sequestered, silent moment pass without laying hold upon God in prayer—and it has passed probably for ever. There is a time, too, when you lose your property—a moment that is short, but a moment when precious impressions may be made. It is then that you feel how precarious is your tenure of all things; you then grope and look about to find some rock, braving the restless wave, standing upon which you can feel secure. This is the time for prayer and vital communion with God; but it is short: let it pass, and it is lost for ever. The time of painful bereavement is very short, but it is a time for great and quickening impressions. When you have lost some

near and dear one, does not your wealth, if you are rich, appear to you utterly worthless? and if great and celebrated among men, does not all seem to you truly contemptible amid your deep sense of loss? That grief absorbs all. That great sea-billow, to use the words of the Psalmist, sweeps over you; and everything else is lost sight of but the loss of the near, the dear, and beloved one. Such is a moment unspeakbly precious—then the soil is prepared for the living seed. It is short; for the impression wears off: let it pass without spiritual improvement, and it is gone for ever.

When this time—so short as seventy or eighty years even when longest—is shortened by half the human family dying in infancy, and still further shortened by a large section of it dying in youth and manhood, and is now closing, it is, surely, reasonable to ask, What is to be the end of it? We are all going to meet God. Of this there is no doubt. It is just as true as that you look upon this page at this moment that you shall look upon the countenance of God, in the light of which the most secret sin shall be seen, and that sin appear as the gigantic mountain—that countenance to

which the blaze of the stars—the splendour of the lightning—the burning sun, are but the dimmest sparkles; you and I, dear reader, must gaze on that countenance, and there read our doom, and see whether God be our unreconciled Judge, or our acquitting and welcoming Father in heaven.

When the time that now is has passed unimproved and unsanctified, the result is certain. It is endless sorrow. If there were not endless penalties among the lost, it would not have been worth while for God to send his Son to die for us. So vast an interposition would not be justified by anything short of the rescue of man from irretrievable perdition. This short time, then, will end in tremendous issues—eternal joy or eternal misery. All analogies and experience preach this fact. If the farmer neglects his seed-time he reaps no harvest; if the sailor neglects the tide, he loses twelve hours of a voyage, or may lose it altogether; if the youth neglects study, he grows up ignorant. And, as sure as you are living, my reader, by the same great law and analogy that God has commanded to run through creation, providence, and grace, if you do not now

secure a footing on the Rock of ages, and lay hold of the atoning power of that precious blood by faith, and plead for its application to your consciences, so surely you will perish everlastingly. The short time will have vanished; and—terrible thought!—there will be no retracing your steps. If these be truths, how is it that men do not meet them, and deal with them as such?—if lies, why do they go to church to hear them, or open a Bible to read them? There is no medium between taking this book as the very echo of the Almighty's voice, or casting it out, and burning it, as a hateful and a deceitful lie. What men call fanaticism and enthusiasm in this matter, is, in the sight of God, soberness and truth. The wonder is, not that men are so much excited by thoughts of eternity, but that they are not more excited than they are. An infidel has made the remark:—"If I thought Christianity true, I should live and labour for it night and day; but I do not believe it, and therefore I am perfectly quiet." Now, it seems as if many Christians who profess to believe it, do not believe it. Let me ask you to review the sacrifices you make to spread it;—see what you

do for it, and you will soon learn what weight it exercises over your minds.

If time be so short, and eternity so great,—if we are rushing to eternity, and eternity, like a great sea, is rushing upon us,—if we are standing upon an isthmus wasted by the floods of time, and washed by the tides of eternity, ready every moment to shoot into that gulf which must be either a haven of bliss or a sea of misery, I ask—Are we Christians? Is the atonement not only a dogma in our head, but a living and personal trust in our heart? Could we say at this moment, if the heavens were to rend, and the earth to be molten, and the stars to fall from their courses, and God himself were to unveil his throne and summon us to appear before it—"I know in whom I have believed; and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day?" Can I say: "I am clothed in righteousness that the fire will shrink from —washed in a blood that makes me so poor that Omniscience can see in me no stain; and, come life, come death, it will be well with me?" Is our trust in that Saviour? Is our belief not a speculative, but a personal trust in an eternal

Saviour—a perfect sacrifice for sin? Are we born again? Is our heart changed? Men are disputing in the present day about rites and ceremonies, and, intentionally or unintentionally, disguising this great truth (and the devil will let us believe what we like about baptism, if we will only let this go): Except a man be born again, he cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven." No rite, priest, ceremony, or church, can save us. The same Spirit of God that shall quicken the dead in their graves is the only power that can change our hearts now. May we recollect that to be a Christian is not to be a patched-up old building—or to make an improvement in this nook and in that department—or to lay aside intemperance, and have recourse to avarice—or to drive out one wicked passion, to bring in another and more "respectable" one, as it is called; but to be born again, to be turned from darkness to light, to undergo a process which must be complete, total, and entire; a change properly designated by being "born again," all things becoming new—a new faith, new hope, new hearts, new joy; and only, if we are so justified by that Saviour, sanctified by that Spirit, does our hap-

piness begin. If, however, we are sanctified, justified, changed, renewed, then we walk the world with an elastic step; we feel the sky to be the dome of our Father's house; and all things—wind, wave, storm, pestilence, plague, and famine—working together for our good; we feel, too, that as the years of life roll onward with greater rapidity, they are only carrying us faster to that blessed assembly where old familiar faces will again be restored, and Jesus shall be seen as he is, and we shall be like him.

CHAPTER IX.

"EXCELSIOR."

"The shades of night were falling fast,
As through an Alpine village passed
A youth, who bore, 'mid snow and ice,
A banner with the strange device—
'Excelsior!'

"'Try not the pass,' the old man said,
'Dark lowers the tempest overhead,—
The roaring torrent is deep and wide;'
And loud that clarion voice replied—
'Excelsior!'

"'O stay,' the maiden said, 'and rest
Thy weary head upon this breast:'
A tear stood in his bright blue eye,
And still he answered, with a sigh—
'Excelsior!'

"'Beware the pine-tree's withered branch—
Beware the awful avalanche!'
This was the peasant's last good night;
A voice replied, far up the height—
'Excelsior!'

"A traveller, by the faithful hound,
Half-buried in the snow was found,
Still grasping, in his hand of ice,
That banner with the strange device—
'Excelsior!'

"There, in the twilight cold and grey,
Lifeless, but beautiful, he lay,
And from the sky serene and far,
A voice fell like a falling star—
'Excelsior!'"

"If ye, then, be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth."—COLOS. iii. 1, 2.

THE Apostle assumes, in the words I have quoted, that Christ is risen from the dead, and that Christians in heart, in spirit, and in affection, are risen with Him also. He is risen as the "first-fruits," and they rise with Him above the world, in spirit, waiting for that day when they shall rise not only in soul, but in body also: for "all that sleep in their graves shall come forth; and the dead in Christ shall rise first." Now, says the Apostle, if this blessed Saviour be the God of your love—if He be the source of your happiness—if He be that centre towards which all the lines and radii of your affections constantly converge—if He be risen far above the things that are seen, into the

realms of things that are real, but now unseen, follow him in heart and hope, till that day come when you shall follow him in fact. If Christ be risen, set your affections upon things that are where Christ is, things that are above, and not upon things that are where we live, and that soon pass away.

I ask, in the first place, In what sense can it be said that the things of eternity—the things that are where Christ is—are things above? It does not mean that they are mechanically or physically so. There is no more excellence in the zenith than there is in the nadir; there is no more piety in the heights than in the depths. What is above at twelve o'clock to-day is below at twelve o'clock at night; it is, therefore, impossible to construe the word "above" as if it meant something mechanically or physically so. It is an allusion to something of a sublimer, loftier, and purer import, on which Christians are to set their hearts, as the source of their happiness and joy. An unregenerate man would be no nearer heaven if he could suddenly unfurl an angel's wing, and soar till he seated himself upon the most distant fixed star; and a child of God would be no nearer hell if he could

pierce all the geological strata of our globe, and locate himself at the very centre of it. It is not *height*, or *space*, but it is *character*, that makes happiness. "Heaven," says Dr. Chalmers, "is not so much a locality as a character." They that have that character shall find heaven everywhere; and they that have it not shall feel nothing but hell everywhere. Misery grows on all trees, is reflected from all objects, is heard in all tones, to the eyes and ears of the lost; and, on the other hand, joy sparkles in the height and in the depth, grows upon every bush, is eloquent in every utterance, in wind and wave, and comes down from the sky, and emerges from the earth, and from all things, to them that are the children of God, and are the called according to his purpose. Make you sure of being where Christ is; and it matters not where the locality be, the happiness must be perfect. Run the risk of being where Christ is not; and it matters not if you are amid the bloom and the unfolding glory of Paradise itself—you would drink nothing but streams of bitterness, and breathe nothing but a perpetual curse.

Man is a bundle of things called "affections;"

and, by the very nature and constitution of his being, he must set these affections upon something. We can no more strip man of his affections (far less so, indeed,) than of his senses. In order to avoid sin, we do not say to a man: "Shut the ear, pluck out the eye;" but we say: "Open the ear to what is good, and the eye to what is pure, and beautiful, and holy." So we speak of the affections: having these affections, there is given a prescription, not for their extirpation, but for their application to that which is good and holy. Man will cease to live the instant that he ceases to love: love he must; his excellency is in the exercise of his affections,—his God is the object on which his holiest affection should repose. There can be no such thing as a vacuum in the human heart; there can be no such thing as love without an object. The Apostle Paul knew this fact, and he prescribes, not for the extinction of the affections, but for their refinement, their elevation, their resting upon objects meet and worthy of so great and glorious things.

Thus Christianity has no sympathy whatever with Stoicism. The old stoic insisted that man should not laugh, nor weep, nor cry, nor feel;

and that the perfect man was he that made the greatest possible approximation to a marble statue: this is nothing like Christianity. The epicurean, on the other hand, said man should eat, and drink, and laugh, and make the most of his senses while he had them, knowing that to-morrow he must die. The one system wished man to be a statue; the other would have reduced him below the swine or the beasts that perish: the one regarded him as reaching the highest excellence when he had become callous to everything; the other regarded him as reaching his highest happiness when he gave licence and scope to all the depraved and fallen passions of his nature. God says: "Be not the stoic, but love." God says: "Be not the epicurean, and love the sensual; but be the Christian, and love the holy, the beautiful, the good, the true." Have affections: exercise your affections; they need training, not extirpating; set your affections upon things that are above, not upon things that are below.

It is not alleged that things below are in all respects bad, and in no respects to be loved. On the contrary, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." Parents may love their

children: a professional man may love his profession; a scholar may love his studies; and a rich man may love, in its place and measure, the wealth that God has given him. You may love all things below; there is no sin in that: the sin lies in loving them excessively. The apostolic prescription is not to be understood as if enjoining us to shut our eyes to all that is beautiful on earth, in order that we may open them to all that is more beautiful in heaven; he does not mean that we are to shut our ear to every sound of time, in order that we may hear the harmonies of eternity only: but it does imply that we are to give the supreme place in our affections to things above; that the sovereignty within us is to be from on high, and not from below; that we are to love less—vastly less—the things that are seen, and infinitely more the things that are unseen, which endure for ever. So we read the passages which fanaticism has often misconstrued. "Labour not for the meat that perisheth, but for that which endureth to everlasting life." We do not learn that we are not to work for our bread; for God himself has told us that "if a man will not work, neither shall he eat:" but

that we are to labour less for the bread that perisheth than for the bread that endureth unto everlasting life. "Whosoever will be my disciple must hate his father, and mother, and sister, and brother, yea, his own life also," does not mean that we are literally to hate them; but that, so superior is to our love to the unseen, and so inferior in comparison our love to the seen, that the latter may be called hating, and the other, from its intensity, loving. The language is evidently comparative; therefore it means, "Set your affections far less upon things that are seen; set your affections far more strongly upon things that are above, unseen, and eternal."

Nor are we taught in the Scriptures that all things which are below are in themselves sinful. There is nothing sinful in a beautiful flower, or in the glorious expanse of the sky, when lighted up with all its lamps; there is nothing sinful in beautiful music, in exquisite poetry, the purest or the intensest eloquence. All these are in themselves sinless. Rational men are sinful; irrational things are only suffering. We are the sinners; nature, in the rebound of our sin, alone is the sufferer. When, therefore, we look at nature, or look at any of the things we

have mentioned, and love them, we are not to regard them as sinful, and suppose the love of them to be sinful; but we are to feel that they are only made sinful when they exhaust our affections, and leave none for God; when they absorb all our love, and the dregs of it only are bestowed upon the things that are above and unseen.

This, therefore, leads me to this great practical lesson—that the sin and danger of man are less in loving, or setting his affections upon what is sinful, and more in loving, or setting his affections excessively upon what is good and lawful. There are men that perish by loving the sinful, and living in it; but there are ten times more that perish by loving to excess the perfectly lawful. Whatever that thing may be —if it be a child, or a fortune, if it be wealth, or literature, or fame, if it be any thing upon earth that is loved more than God—it becomes your god, that is, your idol; and you are as truly and strictly an idolator as if you rejected the living God, and worshipped Diana of the Ephesians, Jupiter, Juno, or Mars. All must have noticed, in perusing the parables of our Blessed Lord, that the constant obstruction to

the full reception of the truth recognised by him was not living in sin, but loving in excess things that were lawful. What was the excuse of one? "I have married a wife." That was perfectly lawful; but excessive conjugal love was his sin—"Therefore I cannot come." Another said: "I have purchased oxen." That was perfectly lawful; but here was the perversion of the lawful to the disobedience of Christ—"Therefore I cannot come." Another said: "I have purchased a piece of land." That, too, was perfectly lawful; but his inference was the peril of the purchase—"Therefore I cannot come." It was on this account that our Lord said: "Whoso loveth father, or mother, or sister, or brother, more than me, cannot be my disciple." For whatever we love more than God comes to be the sovereign in our heart, and the antagonism from that moment begins which must issue in the supremacy, absolute and exclusive, of the idol, or in the supremacy, absolute and exclusive, of the Lord Jesus Christ. "No man can serve two masters:" this is a great law. No man's bosom has more than one throne, and two cannot sit together upon that throne; it must be occupied by the Lord that

raised it, or He will leave it alone, and let it be occupied by an idol. The Pantheon of old, which was dedicated to the gods of the heathen, was willing enough to admit Jesus Christ into a niche in it, and to give Him the reverence due to Him as one of the "*divi majores;*" but the Christian said: "Christ must have all the Pantheon for His palace, His sanctuary, and His possession, or He will have no niche or spot in it at all." It is so with the human heart: Christ must have all, or he will have none of it. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy strength."

Let us notice, in the next place, God's way of drawing man from loving the things that are below, in order to love the things that are above. What is his plan? Not that which we preachers sometimes in our ignorance pursue, of depreciating the things that are below; but the far sublimer and the far more effective plan which we too rarely adopt, of exalting, elevating, magnifying the things that are above. If one were to preach till Doomsday against the love of money, and try to prove what a worthless thing it is, all the recollections of each soul would rise up, and say:—"We know that

money is a very valuable thing—that we cannot get through the world without it—that we cannot pay our debts, cannot feed our family, cannot clothe ourselves without it;" and all such preaching against money and the love of money would be utterly vain—nay, possibly, it would only make people grasp it the more, under the impression that it was threatened with peril by the aggression made by the preacher on it. The plan God pursues is not to depreciate money, not to say it is worthless, but to enlarge upon the unsearchable riches, to point out the superior and the nobler grandeur of the heavenly, and, by the application of the loftier liking, to dislodge and weaken the lowlier liking; by the brighter light to put out the darker light; and so to captivate with the charms of the things that are above, that the things that are below shall grow pale and worthless beside them. A glow-worm shines very beautifully in a black night; but when the moon rises, or the sun shines, its light goes. The lamp burns, and gives light to the room admirably before sunrise; but the instant the sun rises, the inferior light is extinguished. Do not put out your lamp during the night, for

that will leave you in darkness, but let the lamp burn till the sunrise, and the sun will put it out, supersede it, and render it worthless by rendering it unnecessary. So it is in dealing with those who are attached to ambition, to wealth, to the world; it is not by depreciating to excess the object they are now attached to, but by unfolding, in all their magnificence and splendour, the things that are above, and bringing these, in all their glory, into juxtaposition with the things that they love, that the poor and paltry lights of time will become dim in the midst of the intenser splendours and dawning glories of the things that are above, and eternal.

I need not try to enumerate the things that are above. I must, however, mention a few, for though we can love the unseen, we cannot love the unknown. You, dear reader, will never love the things that are above by my simply pronouncing their preciousness; you need to know what they are: and my exposition of their excellency and glory is designed to raise you, by the blessing of God, above the world, into communion with eternal things—to lead you to plant your strong hopes and your enthusiastic sympathies far beyond the visible diurnal sphere;

so that when death comes there will be no rending and snapping of those ties that knit you to the earth—all will be already loosened, and the strong and elastic ties that knit you to glory will put out all their attractive energy, and you will rise as on angels' wing, till faith is lost in fruition, and things below are merged in things that are above. We may love, then, I have said, the unseen, but we cannot love the unknown.

Need I state that the choicest of all above is a Saviour—Christ the Lord? "If ye be risen with Christ seek those things that are above." Why? Because he is there. Those songs in heaven are so musical because He is the key-note—those hymns that are sung are so precious, because He is the object of the adoration—those scenes of glory and of beauty portrayed by the Apocalyptic pen are so attractive, because they lie in the light of His countenance—that throne is so august, because He sits on it—that glory is so bright, because the glory of His people Israel is the substance of it—and all Heaven is so dear to me, because He who has washed me in His blood, who has clothed me in his righteousness, who has

inspired me by His life, who sustains me by His strength, and draws me by the cords of love, is there. "Whom have I in Heaven but Thee?" And who was it that said so? David. But David, it is perhaps objected, had nobody else in heaven. You recollect that the child who was taken from him in chastisement of his sin was there, and that the consolation David felt was: "I shall go to him, but he cannot come to me." David had his child in heaven, and yet he could say: "Whom have I in heaven, O Christ, but thee?" The child was lost in his presence and amid the attractions of that Saviour who was to him more than parent or child. "There is none upon earth," he said, "that I desire besides Thee?" Perhaps David had nothing on earth worth desiring. Not so. He had a throne, a kingdom, an attached and a loyal people, the homage and the *éclat* of many servants and subjects: and yet David, beside his throne, his crown, his grandeur, his victories, his praise, his renown, could say: "There is none upon earth that I desire besides Thee." Do we not observe the beautiful distinction which is made in these words of David? When he speaks of heaven, he says: "Whom *have* I?"

but when he speaks of the earth, he says: "There is none I *desire* besides Thee?" Earth is the place of desiring—*desiring* that we can never gratify; heaven is the place of *having*—full and perfect fruition of more than we have ever dreamed of.

In heaven, too, amid the things that are above, there is an "inheritance incorruptible and undefiled," a crown of glory, mansions of peace—a rest that remaineth for the people of God; a new song, the glorious company of the apostles, the noble army of martyrs, the goodly fellowship of the prophets. There is there a better country, our Father's house, the recompense of reward, the Paradise which Paul saw, but which Paul was unable to describe. There is there the place where all fears have fled, where all doubts are dissipated, where all problems are settled, where is the solution of every enigma, the repose of every faculty, the rest of every affection, the everlasting home of the immortal and redeemed soul. Set your affections upon the things that are above, not upon things that are below.

This command of the Apostle implies that things above are ours. We may not covet what

is not ours; to wish what we have no right to, is to break the express commandment of God. Are these things ours? They are a Christian's; for "all things are yours; Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or life, or death;" it is your inheritance—"an inheritance prepared for you before the foundation of the world;" it is an inheritance that Christ has gone to make ready—"I go to prepare a place for you." Therefore, these things are ours; and, being ours, we may aspire to them as our ultimate and glorious reward.

In what shape and in what sense are they called things above? I have said already they are not mechanically or physically so; because there is no moral excellence in height, and there is no moral degradation in depth. They are things above, in that they are above all change. The region of vicissitude is here; the realm of changelessness is where Christ is. There, not a leaf fades, not a flower withers, not a fruit corrupts; but all fair and beautiful creations, placed as they are far above the region of storm, retain their amaranthine beauty, and bloom in an unshaded and unsuspended glory for ever and ever. It is very

different here: the loveliest things are here the fleetest, and the things we love the most are the very things that are most speedily snatched from us. But there, things are not only above all change, but they are above all death, all destruction; they last for ever and ever; it is "eternal joy;" it "fadeth not away." The last flame will pierce our fire-proof boxes, and calcine our title-deeds, and reduce to dust the homes we have reared, and which we thought would last for ever; but neither flame nor flood can reach that better land: the things that are above are beyond the reach of the flame and the rush of the wave: they are laid up in the presence of God, sharing in His immortality, coeval with His eternity. They are also things above in this sense—that they are above all "that eye has seen, that ear has heard, or that heart has conceived." I have no doubt that in this world there are deposited elements of a grandeur now unknown to us—such as we have never dreamed of. Everything in this world is, at present, under the repressive power of the curse. Why happens it, in winter, that the flowers do not burst forth into bloom? The frost and cold keep them down; and what these

do physically, I believe the curse that is upon the earth does morally. But the instant the curse shall be removed, I have no doubt this world will burst into a beauty, and be covered with a bloom, that eye has never seen, nor heart, in its happiest imaginings, ever dreamed of. We are in a cold, bleak, wasted climate, and we do not know what true beauty is: we have still less a conception of what the ultimate glory will be: we can only guess at it. Sometimes we may have a glimpse of it, when we see the wild rose, by the art of man, cultivated into the magnificent one of our garden; or when we see that the peach, which was once a poisonous berry used by the Indians to envenom their arrows, has become so much changed by man's skill. Such developments are permitted, in order to give us evidence of what latent capabilities are in nature, and what this world may yet burst and bloom into when the curse shall be removed, and the sunshine of the Sun of Righteousness shall fall upon it for ever. So those things that are above, are above what eye has seen, what ear has heard, what heart has conceived. Nay, more, it is not improbable that we shall have senses added to those we now

possess, that will open to us scenes and vistas of magnificence and grandeur which we have not the least conception of at present. We have now five senses; but who knows but there may be, in another state, ten, twenty, or twice twenty? It may be, that when man is raised from the dead in his glorious body, God will unstop all the chambers of that mysterious organ that are now still, because death and sin are in it, and that we shall have senses, and perceptions, incomprehensible now, and behold visions and scenes too bright and beautiful for us to bear at present, of which the Apostle Paul said, when he had but a glimpse of the glory, as he stood upon the outskirts of Paradise: "I saw sights that it is not given for man to speak of," or for man to commit to writing.

Another reason for setting our affections upon these things, is the fact that they grow in importance every day; and, the longer we live, the deeper is the interest in them that we have, or ought to have. Rome, and Babylon, and Jerusalem, have all passed away; Nineveh, Thebes, Palmyra, Memphis—all that was great and illustrious in ancient story is gone, and

scarcely a wreck of them remains. Narrow your vision, and take a retrospect of your own life, even. Let the youngest or the oldest man take a retrospect of a few years: the changes that have occurred will startle, and sometimes sadden you. Go, after a short time, to the place of your boyhood: the school is brightened by other faces; the university is crowded by other students; the old man that you knew there is gone, and the venerable minister that preached there has passed to his account; and along the streets are rushing new currents of new faces all strange to you; and of the remains of that busy day in which you played a part, the few that survive are shut up in their closets infirm, sick, and dying; telling us, as if in one piercing voice, "Set not your heart upon things that slip from you the instant that you see them; but oh! set it upon things that are above, that endure for ever and ever."

It appears to me as if the bright flowers that burst forth in every place, in the season of spring, were teaching us a lesson that the blindest may read—that the fairest and loveliest things must soon fade. It seems to me

that when the earth in summer shoots forth at once all her hidden and mysterious glories, her riches and her beauty, in flower, in grass, in wood, and herb; and afterwards, in autumn, draws them all back again into her bosom; she gives us an idea of what she can produce, and at the same time she forbids us to fasten our affections upon them, since these are but the vision of an hour, and the earnest of the future; we must look beyond them to flowers that never fade, to a spring and summer that never know an autumn.

Another reason for setting our affections upon things that are above, is found in the fact that many whom we have loved upon earth have preceded us, and pre-occupied the home to which we are now aspiring. Is it not true that the world becomes to you, aged man, more and more like a foreign land, and heaven, in your best apprehensions, more like a home and a native place? Is it not true, at this moment, that friends, and children, and fathers, and mothers, and sisters, and brothers, are all in heaven, and that only a few recent strangers, upstarts and youths, are your companions upon earth? Where a man's family is, there a man's

home is. Home is not made up of bricks and mortar, or of rafters, and timbers, and iron, and stone: wherever the family is, there the home is. How joyful is the fact that our home is gradually evanishing from the earth, like a dissolving view, and daily developing itself in the skies, an everlasting scene! If a mother has seen her children successively emigrate to Australia—that land of enterprise in the present day—she will soon gather up her last treasures in her present abode, and sail to find her roof-tree and her fire-side in the far-distant land that once was the stranger-land, but is made now, by those who have pre-occupied it, the home where her heart is. If it be so in these things, should it not, may it not, be yet more so in better and brighter things? Our home is beyond the stars; the holy and dear group that constitutes its charm and its attraction is constantly accumulating there. Set your affection, then, upon things that are above, and not upon the stranger—the growingly stranger—things that are scattered at your feet below. Our property, too, is in heaven. If property is left us on earth, we go to the place where it is, and take posses-

sion of it. We are the heirs of God, and the joint-heirs of Christ: our possession, our property are all amid the things that are above.

Seeking things above casts an ennobling influence upon him that seeks them. We can almost know the man whose heart is in the world, by his downward look; and we can equally know, by his bright eye and upward look, the saint whose heart is in heaven. We can thus know almost by his appearance the man who sets his affections upon things that are above, as distinguished from the man who sets his affections on things that are below. The ardent and absorbing pursuit of money makes a man's face repulsive, as it hardens his heart, and degrades and degenerates his nature. The lofty aspiration toward that which is beyond the world, and in the presence of God, casts an ennobling aspect on the countenance that thus looks sun-ward, and raises that man from herding with the beasts that perish, to walk as a son of God, and sojourn with the heirs and children of the Most High.

Setting your affections on things above is the surest way to find successfully the things that

are below. If we set out to mind our own things first, we shall probably miss our own and God's too; but if we set out to find God's things first, we shall gain His, and certainly our own too. He that seeks first the wisdom of Christ will not occupy the lowest place in the wisdom of Soloman; he who seeks first the riches of glory, obedience to Christ, sympathy with all that is holy, will not least efficiently discharge the dignities, the duties, and the responsibilities of this world. To steer our life without any reference to things above is to steer the vessel by a sort of dead reckoning. When a sailor does this, he calculates the distance he has run, and guesses the spot he occupies upon the sea; but he who steers his vessel by a proper reckoning, looks at the heavenly bodies, and calculates his exact place, and pursues his course direct as an arrow to its mark. By pursuing our course by the things that are below, we take a sort of dead reckoning, we calculate where we are by the distance we have run; but to pursue our course by looking at things above is to take a nobler reckoning, and seek direction by the loadstars of the sky, not by the guesses and calculations of the earth. As sure as we direct

our earthly course by heavenly lights, so sure we shall reach that heavenly haven which is perfect rest, and reap, at the same time, the highest possible amount of human happiness in our course through the world to immortality and to glory. "Seek ye," then, "first the kingdom of God, and all other things shall be added unto you." Set your affections upon things above, and things below will fall into their proper place. The present will be bright in proportion as you bring the future into it; your happiness now will be rich in proportion as you draw on the happiness that is to come; things below will be enjoyed in the ratio in which you set your affections upon things that are above.

They only are admitted to the things that are above in whose hearts things above are admitted now. It is not true that we have only to cast ourselves upon the floods, and we shall be drifted to heaven; only by steering directly and designedly to heaven shall we be sure of successfully reaching it. Has heaven entered into our hearts? unless it has, there is no present probability that we shall enter into heaven. The heart must rise with Christ, if we hope

that that heart shall reign with Christ. Our career begins in grace, and it culminates in glory. Where, then, is our treasure? What is it that we chiefly live for? There is no doubt that every man lives in the future. Not one of us is convinced that we have reached that which will make us happy. Our life is in the future. But what future? Is it the future of this world which is filled with things below, or is it the future of yon world which is filled and radiant with things that are above? All earthly things are fast breaking up: the knell of doom is heard in the palace of the prince, the cathedral of the bishop, the chapel of the priest. All things now are being shaken, in order to make way, I believe, for things that cannot be shaken. If we belong only to this world in our affections, where our only freehold is the tomb, our progress in it is only a dead march, and the pulses of our hearts are but as the beating of muffled drums as we approach to the grave; and the spirit that shall separate from the body that is consigned to that tomb has no bright prospects or sure pledges of things that are above. If, my reader, you have sought things that are below, and sought them sinfully, you must suffer

things that are below, and deeper still—"the worm that never dies, and the fire that is not quenched." Study, then, things that are above: seek to know them, to weigh them, to measure them, to taste them now; and you will long for that blessed day when you shall be admitted to them.

Seek things above in the Bible: it is the mirror of them, it is the chart of them, it is the map that portrays them. Seek them in the preaching of the gospel. Wait upon the preaching of the gospel. No man who honestly and teachably does so will come away disappointed. Seek those things that are above upon the Sabbath-day: it is the day for gathering manna, when heaven is opened. Do not desecrate it to crime: do not degrade it to amusement; consecrate it in your hearts, as God has consecrated it in His Word, to holy, sublime, and lofty purposes. Seek these things above all, in and through Christ, the Way, the Truth, and the Life; in whom all the promises are yea, for whose sake God has promised, and in whose name He will assuredly perform; and then, when the things that are below have all been consumed by the last

flame, and things that are above have been revealed by its light in their imperishable grandeur, you will bless the day when you turned your backs upon the one, and set your faces to the other.

CHAPTER X.

THE WORLD-COPY.

"He walked by faith and not by sight,
By love and not by law;
The presence of the wrong or right
He rather felt than saw."

"And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what *is* that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God."
ROM. xii. 2.

THIS is a singularly difficult prescription of St. Paul, liable, as experience shows, to all degrees and shades of interpretation, and originating or made to originate all sorts of opinions, and perhaps, owing rather to the prepossessions of the reader than the obscurity of the words. Generally speaking, almost every man professing the gospel has his own standard of conformity to the world, which modifies his interpretation of the duty here enjoined, and so far renders his view different from his neigh-

bour's. Some think the advice of St. Paul relates to the vices and the crimes of the world, and to these only: others to the dress and equipage of the world, and that it is therefore a duty to assume a permanent plainness, such as the Society of Friends adopts. Some think it refers to any intercourse with the world at all; and, therefore, that entering a convent is the only way of obeying the injunction: others think the words describe a certain fixed territory, to overstep which is to enter the realms and jurisdiction of the world, as if the separation of the Church from the world were capable of being fixed by material and mechanical lines. We must look at the words of the Apostle not in the light of human opinion. To the honest mind they are abundantly clear. If, in the spirit of St. Paul, we sit down at the feet of Jesus, ready to accept his mind and do his will, we shall not be left in darkness.

Is the prescription to be limited to the days of Paul? The great Roman capital was the scene at this time of luxury and licentiousness, ambition, vain-glory, corruption. It is plainly applicable to that age: this is a fact we need not dispute. To protest against the principles

that reigned in that ancient capital—to retreat to the utmost extent from the objects pursued, the scenes frequented, and the paganism indulged in, was a clear duty a Christian could not and would not debate. The insulation of the Christian character there and then was essential to its very existence.

But the application of the duty to the first century, however just, was not limited to it. It is laid down as broadly as any other precept. Latitude and longitude, time and place, do not govern, but are governed by, Christian truth. It is surrounded by, and there taught as co-equal with, similar texts:—"Love not the world." "The friendship of the world is enmity against God." Whoso is a friend of the world is the enemy of God." As long as there is a church and a world, an army of living spiritual men, and a body of carnal and earthly men, so long the Apostle's prohibition will remain.

What part of Christian morality does it belong to?

It is plainly not its design to denounce open and flagrant and obvious sins; against these there are express prohibiting laws.

It cannot be intended to teach Christians that they are in no respect to agree with the world, or that contrariety to the world is to be their rule in all things. This would be absurd, because necessitating sin; if temperance is practised by the world, we are not to be intemperate; if courtesy is its delight, we are not to be rude; if industry is a worldly virtue, it does not therefore cease to be Christian.

The prohibition plainly relates to a territory in the Christian walk which no law or statute can otherwise cover; it deals with modes of life, intercourse with society, rules of business, and other things occurring on the border of Christianity and the world. It is the complement of the decalogue. It is what a Christian falls back on in case of doubt or perplexity. It deals with the more delicate and less easily defined duties of the gospel.

This prohibition supposes a distinction and difference between Christ's Church and the world, or a Christian and a worldling. Their character, course, principles, direction, motive, and destiny, are opposite. Regeneration of heart makes a tremendous difference. It is no ecclesiastical arrangement, no sacramental dis-

tinction, no conventional and outward feature, but a deep, thorough, inner transformation, that goes through and moulds and inspires the whole man. Surely the change is no slight or superficial one, to create which the Son of God came from heaven and was crucified; yet he gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. We are declared to be "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a peculiar people." This is not empty language. The marks are sharp and clear, and well defined.

The world has its distinctions and differences. One section has laws of honour—another laws of fashion—another certain conventional statutes or usages. Some outward aspects are occasionally the same, both in the Christian and man of the world; but in the one case they are put on, in the other they originate from within.

There is an illustration of this subject on a national scale in the case of the Jews. They were hedged round by peculiar rites, ceremonies, laws, interdicted from conformity to the customs of the nations, marriage, or affinity, or compact, all for one definite end, that they might not fall

into the idolatry of the nations. This distinctive arrangement was made, in order that the guardians of the sacred volumes should preserve entire separation from the infection of the Gentiles.—Levit. xxvi. 12; 2 Cor. vi. 17. An humbler exemplar is found in Sparta, originated by Lycurgus.* His design was to raise a warlike, hardy, and powerful nation. He strictly interdicted all intercourse with Athenian philosophy and Corinthian splendour. This he did, not because he condemned or approved either, but because separation from both was essential to his object. He did not contradict their customs for contradiction's sake, or accept them because they accepted. He adopted what subserved, and resigned what opposed, his end. So must it be very much with us and the world. What in the world is plainly condemned in Scripture, there is no difficulty about. In such a case, clean renunciation is our only course; but what we are speaking of are such things as are not even named, or condemned in the Word of God, or that territory, in short, which is not covered by any positive law in the Bible. In such cases the question is—Does this in any

* I am indebted to Barnes for this illustration.

way subserve the purposes of my conversion, destiny, and duty? Will this impede or advance, cool or increase, religious feeling? When there is no positive interdict in Scripture, the inquiry must be—What is the moral and spiritual influence of this? How far will this either glorify God, or convert sinners, or build up souls? The tendency and end in such cases is the test. We may determine the nature of things innocuous and indifferent in themselves, or unnoticed in the Bible, by their tendency.

We are not here taught that we are to renounce all that the world has and is. This world puts on many things that in your case originate from Christian principle. We are not to live in a hut, because men of the world live in palaces; or to be clothed with rags, because men of the world wear purple. Christianity does not Macadamise the social system—it is not a leveller. Were Christianity universal in its deepest influence and force, still there would be rich and poor. It demands that the rich Christian should no more live as the rich worldling, and that the poor Christian should no more live as a poor worldling, but each in his place show what Christianity is, and does for him.

It is clearly taught, that we are not to regulate our opinions and feelings by those of the world. They live in and for the present. Pleasure is their supreme aim, and end, and effort. To be admired, caressed, and courted, as beautiful, brave, and gay, is all their desire. To enjoy themselves, to eat and drink, to amass money, is their absorbing aim. Do not say, Christians do so. Professors, only, not Christians, do so. All this gaiety is a sad procession —the splendour of a perishable spangle. We are not to join in it, we are not to adopt their feelings, their creed, or their course. They may call you singular, but you cannot help it; it is Christianity. You have a grand object before you, which shapes and tones your life; your maxims are in the Bible, your opinions are drawn from it.

Not to mingle in associations with the world which are inconsistent with the grand end, and object, and duty of a Christian, is one element of nonconformity to the world. His chief function on earth is, to glorify God and promote the kingdom of heaven. The Spartan would at once see, that whether the Corinthian was right or wrong in his distinctive and pecu-

liar habits, such habits were injurious to his training as a Lacedemonian hero and soldier, and therefore he avoided them. Apply this to the theatre. I am not here pronouncing on those who frequent and support it. I could argue it on this ground, and with worldly men, but this is not now my object. I speak to Christians and of Christianity in reference to the world. Were every drama perfectly pure, and every actor of spotless excellence, and were no representation permitted that gave wrong impressions, caricatures, and exaggerations of man,—and, for all I know, it may be so,—were the characters that crowd the doors, lanes, and lobbies of the theatre all you could wish, yet, is going to a theatre—I appeal not to any law, but to the delicate taste of a Christian,—in the spirit or after the example of Jesus, or in any way conducive to your best interests, or a preparation for prayer or solemn thought? Could you pray before you entered the play-house—"Sanctify this spectacle to the glory of Thy name and to the good of thy people. Lead me not into temptation?" I speak to regenerate men—Do you feel at home in such scenes? Is the theatre a relaxation? Is it not rather a

powerful excitement, from which you do not soon recover, bearing to proper recreation the relation that ardent spirits bear to water? If frequenting the playhouse cannot be said in any way to promote an eternal interest in yourself or in others, it may do the reverse. In short, does it not seem that to refuse to frequent the playhouse is very much in the spirit of these words—"Be not conformed to this world." I am no Puritan, I am no enemy to recreation, no advocate of precision, pretension, affectation. But these things are true.

Not to be prompted by a desire after the applause of the world, is very much in the spirit of the Apostle's words. To create envy, admiration, flattery, honour, is the end of worldly living; and so far as Christians admit these into their bosom, so far they are conformed to this world. Newspapers, or their encomia or condemnation, is the joy or terror of the worldling. Credit for cleverness, talent, learning, rank, is the thirst of men of the world. I do not pronounce on the merit or demerit of the world in this matter, or on the purity and exemption from such motives in professors; I merely assert, that all this is very

much in violation of the prescription—"Be not conformed to this world." To please God, is the prayer and labour of the Christian. To do his will is his "meat and drink;" not to be moved from this by the world's smiles or frowns, is very like Christ. To plant yourself in the sunshine of the countenance of God, disregarding the passing cloud, or the evanescent meteor, is duty.

In the world is our place in Providence; not of, but above the world, is our calling. A man may be rich, but yet it may be seen, that the interests of the gospel are supreme in his heart. Christianity may sparkle in a royal diadem, shine through imperial purple, and the monarch that wears it be to the Church a nursing father. Take the place, high or low, which God, in his providence, assigns you, but seek and show in it a new spirit and end. In spirit, aim, and end, and in career, rise above the world. Live not for its prizes, engage not in its pursuits, as far as they are peculiar to the world: covet not the society of the world, elegant, literary, or refined or exalted; sacrifice these to higher and holier ends. Lot went into the world of Sodom to make money; Joseph into Pharaoh's palace,

and Daniel into the court of Persia; in the providence of God, the latter were blessed and proved blessings to all around; the former lost his family, and almost his own soul. Or if you are placed in relationships that cannot be dissolved, meekly bear testimony against the evil, and learn, for consolation—"The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of all their temptations." Christianity does not rend asunder the ties of social life. In no case so much as in permanent relationship with the ungodly, does a Christian need more of meekness, gentleness, patience, and forbearance of the gospel.

We shall illustrate and fulfil the text, by avoiding excess in every lawful matter. It is not in doing what is forbidden, but in plunging into excess in what is lawful, that the supremacy of the world stands forth most clearly. If you are young, and have plenty of leisure, you will not spend the day in music or painting, light reading, shopping, visiting, talking; each innocuous in its place, and only criminal when indulged in to excess. If these become the burden of life—the end of its existence, and its chief care and employment, you are of and in the world, and these things are proofs that you

are so. In the discharge of the various functions of society, violent political feeling, strong party adhesions, great parish oratory, advocacy of great reforms everywhere but at home, are not presumptive of much spirituality. There is risk in all this—these things tend to absorb all; we may forget our citizenship is in heaven. Men who hold great offices are bound to give their greatest energies to the discharge of such duties. But in private life, vehement politics and spirituality of heart and mind rarely go together. In business we are, as much as lieth in us, not to conform to the world. Its anxieties, trials, difficulties, risks, are very absorbing, yet Christians must not be its slaves. Excessive pursuit of business destroys thousands. It is too often laid down, that a fortune must be got, and therefore night and day the head toils, and late and early the hands work; not an hour is spared for recreation; thought, anxiety, absorbing pursuit of gain, occupy the whole soul, till at length the Sabbath is eyed by Mammon as Adam and Eve in Paradise by Satan.

I fear a vast amount of the modern system of trade is antichristian and worldly; the renunciation of business is not necessary; reform, not

renunciation, is duty. The real view of business is, to provide food and raiment for ourselves and families in our passing through the world, and, in this light, business would be part of our liturgy, holy as worship, done everywhere to glorify God; a preparation for heaven, which is not an asylum into which the victims of the world are cast, but a place for which natural men are prepared by the Holy Spirit of God.

In forming alliances, and I allude chiefly to the marriage tie—"In the Lord," must be not only in the ceremony, but in the parties. The unhappiness of which women, fearing God, become the victims in marriage with vain, empty, worldly-minded, or Romish and Infidel men, is incalculable. Such marriages brought the deluge on the old world. It was such that Balaam taught Moab to lay before the children of Israel; still such are precursors of evil, nurseries of woe. Beauty, fortune, rank, must, and in a Christian will, yield to Christian principle.

In conclusion, I point to the decision of Ruth; she resigned her country, her gods, her earthly prosperity, and clave to Naomi, and to Naomi's God—"Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee."

Another instance, equally decided, is described in these words—"By faith, Moses, when he had come to years of discretion, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. Wherefore come out and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you and be a father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters." "Be ye transformed by the renewing of your minds." The first movement is an inner one. It begins at the centre. There must be an inner and central revolution of the heart before there can take place an outward revolution in the conduct. The love of God in the heart expels the love of the world, absorbs every minor preference, and eventually reigns supreme. "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." This great change regulates all. "Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world." Set your affections on things above. Let us feel our treasure in heaven. Things above are every day assuming intenser interest. The rising tide is rolling in upon us, and very soon what we call life will be covered with the ocean of

eternity. Our ties are becoming fewer on earth, more numerous in heaven. Day after day the sky shuts down on fewer of those we loved. Seek, in daily and ceaseless prayer, the aid and strength of the Holy Spirit of God. A Divine power alone keeps us;—to its fountain let us evermore lift our eyes. The night is far spent—let this voice, lifted up in its silence, penetrate our hearts and shape our feelings and our pursuits.

CHAPTER XI.

THE TRANSFORMED MIND.

"We live in deeds, not years; in thoughts, not breaths;
In feelings, not in figures on a dial.
We should count time by heart-throbs. He most lives
Who thinks most, feels the noblest, acts the best."

"Be ye transformed."—Rom. xii. 2.

I have now to show the converse of what I have endeavoured to expound in the previous chapter. What is it to be transformed by the renewing of the mind?

If transfigured and renewed, a man is converted—truly converted. The preacher cannot speak too clearly in this matter. He must not encourage any resting satisfied midway. To be sober, thoughtful, serious, is not all; to be anxious, inquiring, awakened, is not necessarily the renewal of the heart. It is not enough to be sprinkled or dipped, either young

or old; to be admitted a communicant; to belong to the purest of Churches; all this comes short of the requirement. "Ye must be born again," "transformed by the renewing of your mind;" a thorough, inner, radical revolution of the soul is required. That change which man can neither give nor destroy, which begins in the individual's heart, overflows the whole life, and ceases not till all within and around is transformed, is what is demanded. It is impossible there can be life from the dead, a new creature, a total change of our spiritual state, and we be ignorant of it, just as it is impossible that Spring can come on the earth unfelt by it or us, or that slaves can be set free and themselves not know it.

Profession of the gospel and of adhesion to the Saviour is an essential element in this transformation. Such profession is indicated in these words—"Whosoever shall confess me before men, him will I confess before my Father which is in heaven." This shows itself in union and communion with the people of God, in appearing at the communion-table to commemorate the Saviour's sacrifice, not to obtain love, but to express love to Christ.

"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." This is part of Christianity, a plain and obvious prescription of it. If our conversion be real, it cannot be hidden; if deep and true, it will break through every enveloping wrapping, and shine and spread its lustre in the ratio of its depth and and vitality—there will be no parade, and yet no concealment. All God has made manifests itself:—the stars twinkle, the rivers run, the flowers bloom, the birds sing, and so Christians shine. Conversion is not gold in the mine, but in currency.

Another element in such transformation is, a sacrifice of anything and everything plainly required in Scripture and for Christ's sake. The absorbing love of money will be displaced. "Ye cannot serve God and mammon." "Covetousness is idolatry." Yea doubtless, and I count all but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ. . .that I may win Christ, and be found in him." If he send flame to consume, or open the ocean to swallow up your property, you may grieve, for this is human; but you will say—"The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away;

blessed be the name of the Lord." If the claims of charity, or the advocate of the Christian mission, knock at your door, you will respond —"Welcome." Is he a patriot who sacrifices nothing for his country—a friend who will not help a friend?

Abjuration of every evil course is another element in true transformation of soul. Not only grossly evil habits will be renounced, but deception, chicanery, unfaithfulness, untruth. "If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out." No ecstasies of feeling—no excitement of the affections—are of any worth in the absence of sterling honesty, and integrity of heart and life. If the calling in which you now find yourself necessitates the violation of the great and distinctive features of Christian character, however painful, it is a duty to renounce it. "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." Paul renounced his practice of persecution. The Ephesians gave up their curious arts and books of magic, however costly. So must you give up unholy company. They may have brilliant talent, and acknowledged genius—they may be splendid on the turf, or first in the

chase—most able patrons of the drama—good poets and painters—men of rank and family—but all these must give way to the higher claims; and, in the absence of Christian character, these may be only elements and mines of mischief. If unsanctified, though brilliant, society be your preference on earth, can you be said to be ripening for that society which is made up of the pure, the good, the holy? Abandoning even the nearest and dearest rather than abandonment of Christ, must be contemplated. "He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me." "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren and sisters, yea, and even his own life also, he cannot be my disciple."

If our conscience is convinced that the requirements of the gospel, clearly indicated in the Word of God, require that we differ in opinion from parties with whom we would rather agree, and that we should cease to accompany them to what our enlightened conscience shows to be evil, we must risk such separation. The hand must be ever ready to do, and the ear ever ready to hear Christ's bidding. This only

is the attitude of a Christian. Only remember, Christ's will is not what man says, but what the Holy Spirit has inspired, and clearly revealed. If we are transformed, we shall pursue a course fitted as much as possible to neutralise past wickedness—to repair the injury we have done—to repay the obligations we have contracted—to devote time, and talent, and influence, to spread the gospel to which our life has been hitherto an obstruction, "redeeming the time." The privilege of prayer, so long and criminally neglected, we shall seize, and draw new strength and blessings from on high. The lessons of the Bible, so long unread, will now be our meditation by night and study by day. The public worship of God, and its accompanying lessons, and its blessed Sabbaths, we shall now covet. This new transforming impulse or power will rush into every relationship, and office, and retreat, invigorating, adorning, and directing. The claims of the Bible, the missionary cause, we shall respond to with a liberality proportionate to our long neglect. One who is thus transformed, will be actuated by a strong desire to be as eminent a Christian as possible. No mere state of safety from wrath

will satisfy the Christian; his attitude is upwards, his aim perfection: "Be ye perfect," "holy, as He who has called you is holy;" to reach the very highest stage of Christian character—and to do so he will subordinate all on earth. Time will be taken from the counting-house, not from the closet: when an abridgment of expenses is necessary, it will be made, not in matters of benevolence, but in circumstance. He will rather dim the splendour of his equipage, than diminish his donations to the cause of Christ. To live for Christ alone is necessary, nothing else is. Heaven and earth may pass away, but this abideth. One who is thus transformed and renewed will pray for increase, and depth, and force of living and real religion. It is too plain that there is too much deadness, apathy, indecision, and earthliness, in every section of the church of Christ. There is a crying necessity for another Pentecost. The dry, parched land needs showers and dews, and thirsts for it. If you be transformed, you too will thirst for this; pray for it, and seek to excite an interest in it. If men labour for perfection in science, progress in arts, why should not we pray, "Revive thy work in the midst of

the years?" One thus transformed will ally himself with every Scripture plan for the conversion of sinners. To spread that faith whose foundations are laid in the love of God, and cemented by the blood of the Lamb, is one of the very first obligations of the Christian. Jesus died to create and bring salvation to us. We live to carry it to others. The salt is silently to leaven, and the light incessantly and clearly to shine.

The man who makes no effort to make known the gospel, has not felt the gospel in his own heart as he ought to feel it. Where there is no light in the life, there is no warmth in the heart. He whose fatal malady has been cured by a specific medium, is sure to do his utmost to make known its value to similar sufferers. The model of a renewed and transformed life is the Lord Jesus. Pantheism has its representative-men. Christianity has its representative-man—the true God—the true Man—the perfect representative of God. How totally unlike his age, and yet with nothing singular about him, was the Lord Jesus Christ! how little moulded was he by his age!—how truly was the age moulded and elevated by him! what

earnestness of feeling and purpose, and yet no fanaticism! What reverence for order and law, yet what superiority to all outward conventionalism did he show, when he announced, "Blessed are the pure in heart!" What labour to convert a soul, a single soul!—what calm and awful rebuke of the world's hypocrites! The Christian's model is not concocted in Paris, nor made up in London; it is not public opinion, nor what newspapers write. Neither priest-ridden, nor press-ridden, nor fashion-ridden, must a Christian be. As Christ was in the world, so should he be in it, not of it. The man of Nazareth stands out in his age, distinct, clear, protesting. He meant his people to be so too—a chosen generation, a peculiar people. He is calling a people out of the world—He is erecting an empire of love, and righteousness, and peace in the heart of the world; a kingdom in the midst of the kingdoms of time, beautiful, holy, glorious. Unless we are thus like Him, He will say to us, "I never knew you." If thus transformed we shall look for heaven, and accept and realise justification, on the alone foundation of Christ our sacrifice and righteousness. On no ground but this can a Chris-

tian stand; even that ground of which not one particle or atom is contributed by us in any sense, shape, or degree—a righteousness neither to be increased, nor decreased, nor diluted, nor mixed, nor modified, by anything of ours. The clear comprehension of this is our best preservative from predominant errors and heresies. It is, in short, a righteousness on which Paul, and Luther, and Calvin stood, and saw forms and ceremonies, and church, and priest, and sacrament, in proper and true perspective. As truly as our sins are laid on Christ, and he suffered, so truly his righteousness is laid on us, and therefore we have peace. Christ had nothing in him worthy of death when he died—we have nothing in us worthy of heaven when we enter there. He, the spotless Lamb, wore our tainted fleece; and now we, the sinful and stray sheep, return wearing his holy fleece. They who are thus renewed, receive, and apply to the Bible, as the only source of belief and authority in Divine things. Some accept the Bible as an excellent book, and admit certain doctrines—which are the same as those of natural religion—to be true; but they not only reject soul-humiliating and self-renouncing doctrines, but

become indignant and exasperated that such truths are pressed upon them. Every doctrine contained in the whole Bible is true, divine, obligatory. A Christian's enquiry is, What is in the Bible? and what is meant by what is in it? His creed is, not what Augustine says, or Bernard thinks, or Luther writes, nor what the best men, or most men say, but what God has said. We must answer to God for accepting any word but His. No commentary of church or priest, or father or divine, may supersede it. Like Abraham, we must tell all these our servants to remain at the foot of the mount, while we ascend and see God, face to face, and hear, not an echo, but the grand original. It is the renewed mind that proves what is the will of God. To understand the Bible we need no pope, nor council, but a new heart. The reason of the differences among Protestants is, not that the Bible is so dark, but because all are not truly regenerate. Then to be transformed, or to be a Christian, is not merely an outward change or party adhesion—it is a heart and treasure in heaven—it is to be raised above this world, and to look at all things in the light of the gospel. No real or imaginary severity in

what God says or requires may modify our acquiescence. Has God said it? is the only question. Many, in every age, have had to try themselves, Do I love Christ?—am I a Christian? and then have marched to torture, rejoicing to be counted worthy to suffer for "His Name's sake." We have no such ordeal at present on earth, but there is a yet more searching ordeal at the judgment-seat; and if we shrink from the scrutiny of the Bible now, how shall we shrink from the scrutiny of its Author hereafter? What a necessity is there for honest dealing with our souls! The merchant is not satisfied till he knows he is solvent. The landholder is ill at ease till he is sure there is no flaw in his lease. The sick man is anxious till he has ascertained if his disease be fatal or not. How inconsistent are we, if on that point on which should be concentrated the intensest anxiety—the destiny of souls—nothing but indifference should be felt! Brethren, we must know the worst of our case before we ever know the best.

Do not excuse yourselves by pleading the inconsistency of professors of the gospel. They may be hypocrites, but this is no reason why

you should be unbelievers. They are perishing in the church; this is no reason why you should perish in the world. You are answerable to God, not for them, but for yourselves. "If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and sinner appear?" "Search me, O God, and know my thoughts." There is no time to lose or spare; we are rushing towards Eternity, and Eternity is rushing towards us, and our meeting-place is the judgment seat.

CHAPTER XII.

THE TIME-HAZE.

"Here all our gifts imperfect are,
But better days draw nigh,
When perfect light shall pour its rays,
And all these shadows fly."

"For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face; now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known."—1 Cor. xiii. 12.

There is much, even in prophecy, clear enough to refresh us with its glorious prospects; there is much dark enough to make us humble in our ignorance, and to put confidence in Him who has promised to make the obscurest things plain. It may be said, not merely of prophecy, but of all that we know of the doctrines of the gospel of Christ, that we see through a glass, darkly. It is true, no doubt, that the Bible is a revelation of that which is hidden; it is no

less true, that it reveals, with great perspicuity and plainness, the leading, essential, and fundamental doctrines of the gospel of Christ. But beyond the principles it clearly reveals, there is a dark and extensive region of the unknown, into which scarcely a ray penetrates, and of which we can only form a conception by the dim and scattered hints of its nature which are spread over the sacred page. It is true, therefore, of all revelation, not only of inspired Scripture, but of all God has made, that the more we actually know, the more we find remains still to be known. Each great truth that God brings within the horizon of our view seems to bring behind it a train of deeper and more mysterious truths. As each new day brings after it a new night, so each new truth that we find in the Bible brings after it another dark and mysterious truth, which we are unable to penetrate. In the future, when we shall have no need of the sun nor of the moon, when we shall no more see through a glass, darkly, when the veil shall be rent and we shall see God and all things face to face; even then, I believe, the unknown will be far greater than the known. If we only recollect that there is

an infinite panorama to be revealed, and only finite beings to see it, we can easily suppose that our state in heaven will at no stage be stationary, but ever and ever progressive, and that, as we learn what we knew not before, we shall see there is more still to be learned—our horizon widening as we move to each new height of that lofty mount which we shall ascend, revealing, at each height we attain, new heights that are still to be reached, ever upward and ever onward, light and joy increasing as the cycles of eternity go round and the new horizon spreads before, behind, and around us. And thus, then, it will be, that even in that future state where we shall see face to face, we shall see much unknown beyond that which is fully known—the very brilliancy of what we do know, making more apparent the darkness of that which is beyond us, and which we shall afterwards know in succession.

I may apply the passage very briefly, and only very briefly, to creation itself. The most enlightened and scientific men will tell you, that the more they know of nature and of the things of the created world, the more they feel remains to be known. It is always the greatest

philosopher who is most convinced of his own ignorance. Sir Isaac Newton, when congratulated on his vast discoveries, remarked:—"I am but like a child gathering shells and pebbles round the sea-shore, that are just kissed by the waves, while the great unsounded depths of the mighty ocean lie unapproachable beyond me." He who has made himself most profoundly acquainted with all the mysteries in the height and depth of this created earth, is the very man who will own how little he does know, and how vast is that region that remains yet to be known. What little the mathematics, or chemistry, or geology, for instance, teach respecting creation, leads us to infer, that without these we should have very imperfect apprehensions indeed of God's works of creation. Nobody can be ignorant, who has a smattering of any of these sciences, that they show traces of wisdom, footprints of benevolence, which are perfectly undiscoverable to the person who is not instructed in them. And yet these sciences, which have now risen to so great a perfection, are, even in their best state, but dark glasses through which we now see very darkly; and when these dark and dim glasses shall be re-

moved, or when the range of the telescope shall be extended, and the power of the microscope increased, we shall see, I doubt not, in the firmament above, and in the earth beneath, in all that is magnificently great, in all that is elegantly small, such traces of the wisdom, the power, and glory of God, as will overwhelm and astonish us. Even now in this world, by the aid of art and science, which increase one degree our natural focus, we can see overwhelming proofs of the greatness of Deity. For instance, on a starry night, I look up into the sky, and notice those stars that, like altar-candles, burn perpetually about the throne of God; I borrow the aid of the telescope, and see that these are not mere lights, sparkling as I have descibed, but that they are worlds, and that the very remotest of these are not the limits, but the thin suburbs of creation,—that those that I see farthest off by the aid of the telescope are but the outposts and the sentinels of that starry host that minister perpetually around the throne of Deity. What a conception does such a display give me of the grandeur, the glory, the wisdom, the power of Him who created all, and governs all continually!

Fallen as this world is, I have no doubt that if we could see it in an intenser light, and not through the *media* of glasses darkly, we should witness in it a far brighter revelation of God, wise, good, powerful, beneficent, than we now see. The fact is, that all we know of creation at this moment is most limited; there is nothing to exalt us, plenty to humble us. The height to which the astronomer has soared is but a few miles, the depth to which the geologist has dug is but a few feet; so that the astronomer seems to me like one who tries to measure the firmament with a foot-rule, and the geologist like one that tries to explore the bosom of the earth with a taper; and all that they disclose, much as it adds to our present information, is what may be expected of those who search after God in so dim and faint a light.

It is thus, then, that in looking at creation as it is, and in all its provinces, we see but through a glass darkly; a day comes when we shall see creation clearly.

Let us look at the next department of being, and see these truths as applied to it. There is a Providence, I need not state, superintend-

ing the movements of planets and the fall of sparrows; ministering to the angel, and feeding the wild raven. There is no such thing as chance in the world. I cannot conceive that any man can have a moment's peace who believes that anything in the universe is left to accident, because our experience every day proves that little things are the hinges of great events—the turning of a corner is the fixing of a destiny—a movement to the right or to the left the determining of the whole after-career of one's life. Let any one look to the least event in his history, and he will see, that if that event had not occurred, all his biography might have been materially altered, either in tone or direction. There is no doubt, then, that there is a God or a Providence in the least as well as in the greatest concerns of life. But when we look at the movements of that Providence, we are constrained to own, we can only see them through a glass darkly. That mysterious suffering is not accidental—it is from God; but why, wherefore, and to what end, we see through a glass darkly. That severe stroke that swept from your eyes the near, the dear, the beloved, is all wrapped in mystery; you have but glimpses

of its meaning; you see it through a glass darkly. That storm that burst upon you like the thunder-cloud, and washed away the accumulations of the honest industry of many years, you see through a glass darkly. We know not what it is, nor whereto it tends. This only we know—that our God awakened the storm, our Father commisioned the cloud, and that what we do not see now we shall see hereafter, when we see no more through a glass darkly, but as face to face.

There is much in every dispensation, therefore, that we cannot now penetrate. We find it wrapped in partial mystery, visible only through a glass darkly; and such glimpses as we do obtain lead us only to long to obtain more. But there are certain great facts which we can see clearly, such as that "no tribulation for the present seemeth to be joyous, but it worketh out the peaceable fruits of righteousness;" that "all things work together for good to them that love God." Many have found that the loss of health has been the safety of the soul—that the five, the six, the seven months that sickness kept them prisoners, have been to them the most blessed months that

have occurred in all their biography. Many have felt the loss of the infant to be the weaning of their heart from the place that the infant has left, and the fixing of that heart on the home which that infant has gone to pre-occupy. Many have found that the loss of a fortune has been the restoration of a soul, and that the bitterest cup had a blessing in it, and the darkest cloud a fringe of light, and the blackest sky an unseen but true and covenant rainbow, indicating that a Father was there, superintending the storm, and limiting all its effects. We see these things now through a glass darkly; hence we misconstrue; but when from some lofty pinnacle of the better land we take a retrospect of the way that the Lord has led us, we shall see that every turn, and winding, and crossing, and check, and obstruction, and fall, and sickness, and sorrow, were just as necessary to our everlasting happiness as that Christ should have died, or that the Bible should have been written.

Let us look now at the truths of God's Word, and we shall find that these, even, we see through a glass darkly. Let me refer to the great facts of Revelation, and the applica-

tion and the truth of these sentiments will be obvious immediately. Let us look through this glass at God Himself. How little do we comprehend of God! What do I comprehend of a God present in the remotest star, and in the minutest particle of dust: a God whose centre is, as it has been defined, everywhere, and whose circumference is nowhere? Literally nothing. I see God's grand attributes through a glass darkly; and when I begin to think of Him, like the ancient philosopher I ask one day, and when I have thought that day I must ask a second, and when I have thought that, I must ask a third; and the longer I think the less I know, and the more I must conclude we see but through a glass darkly. Let us read the nature of God as it is defined more specially in the Bible. It tells us, for instance, the Father is God, and the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God, and yet they are but one everlasting and glorious God. What do I comprehend of this? Literally nothing. I need not add now that it is most absurd for the Socinian to say, "I reject the Trinity because I cannot comprehend it." He cannot comprehend Eternity, Omnipresence—the attributes he does ascribe

to God. On such principles, therefore, he ought to reject the existence of God altogether. What, then, do we comprehend of the Trinity? Very little; and all the explanations of it I have read only make the mystery more apparent. We see it through a glass darkly. The fact is revealed—the doctrine is incomprehensible. It is not against our reason, but it is above it. The Trinity is not a contradiction, but it is a truth partly luminous. It is a revelation, but not an analysis. It is so plainly revealed, that we can see that it is; but it is so obscurely comprehended that we cannot know how it is. There is enough revealed of that mysterious truth to lead us to adore; there is nothing revealed about it to lead us to be curious, to speculate, or to be puffed up. We see it through a glass darkly.

Look at the doctrine of the Incarnation, which we think of as a very plain truth; and yet even this foundation of our hopes we see but through a glass darkly! How can the Infinite and the Finite coalesce! How can there be the deepest suffering and the highest satisfaction! How want and fulness, weakness and strength, life and death, can meet and mingle

in one, is a mystery revealed in the Scripture, but seen by us through a glass darkly.

Let us refer to the work of the Holy Spirit of God. We see this only through a glass darkly. It is told us, "Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." Here is a Divine presence, a Divine power needed to change man's heart. But how does the Spirit act? how does He bow the will and not annihilate it? how does He restore, retune the tangled and discordant affections of the heart, not against our will, but with our will? The action we cannot trace, the agent we cannot see; the effects alone we can feel: for "the wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but knowest not whence it cometh and whither it goeth. So is every one that is born of the Spirit." The sceptic denies it, the fanatic raves about it, the Christian accepts it, and blesses God that he knows it in his heart, though he sees it through a glass darkly.

Let us bring before us two great truths: the Sovereignty of God, and man's responsibility. We see these also through a glass darkly. It is, for instance, honestly and truly said, "Come

unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest;" but it is no less honestly and truly said, "No man can come unto me unless the Father which hath sent me draw him." This seems to be a contradiction, but it is not so. We see the two truths, in their points of contact, only through a glass darkly; and in our folly infer a contradiction, where if admitted into higher light, we should see all to be harmony and order. Again, it is honestly and truly said, "Repent." It is no less honestly and truly said, "Christ is exalted to give repentance." It is honestly and truly said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ." It is no less honestly and truly said, "To you it must be given to believe." These we cannot reconcile; but they are true, and that man acts not only unscripturally, but most unphilosophically, who says—"There are two truths which I cannot reconcile; therefore I will reject one of them." The true way is—"There are two truths which I cannot now reconcile, because I see them through a glass darkly. I will wait till that glass is broken, and greater light shines upon them, and then I shall see there is harmony where there now is apparently

discord." The two ends of the chain are distinctly seen, one upon the one side of the river, and the other on the other side; but the intermediate links are lost in the stream of mystery that flows between. We see through a glass darkly. Take again the efficacy of prayer. We are told in Scripture, again and again, to pray; yet the more we think of prayer, and try to analyse it, the more inexplicable it seems, on the supposition that God is an unchangeable, an infinitely wise God. For instance, we might reason in this way:—If God sees a fact to be best, and has purposed it, what is the use of my praying to Him not to do it? If God has raised a storm, and awakened the storm, and placed the ship in jeopardy, what is the use of my praying that He will call back the winds, and hush the sea, and save the beloved, in the midst of that ship? God is wise, God is powerful, and if it be best which is, why should I pray that it should be otherwise? In other words, how am I to reconcile prayer with its efficacy, and God with His sovereignty, His wisdom, and His power? I see it through a glass darkly. This I can read: "Pray always and faint not;" and this I can read: "Seek,

and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened; ask, and ye shall obtain;" and all the instincts of my nature prompt me to pray; all the biddings of my Bible prompt me to pray. And perhaps this may be the solution of the apparent contradiction, between the truth that God is wise and good and sovereign, and the fact that God answers prayer. It may be His purpose to do nothing that is not prayed for, just as it may be God's purpose to do that which is infinitely wise, good, and true; and therefore prayer may be reconciled even with other portions of God's sovereignty. But whether we can reconcile it or not, we know this—that it is our duty and privilege to pray, and it is God's promise to give what we pray for, if it be good for us.

I might allude to many other truths that we see through a glass darkly, some of them perplexing enough—for instance, the admission of sin into the world. What a mystery is here! Why did omnipotence allow it? Why not have preserved the world from its taint, and humanity from its havoc? Why must suffering, and famine, and wrecks, and battle-fields, and sicknesses, and deaths, and sorrows, still

revel in the midst of the human family, and and select their respective victims? God has Omnipotence to prevent it; He has love that is infinite: why does he not prevent it? Why should there be any section of God's created universe in which there shall be, for ever and ever and ever, the ceaseless moan of despair, the awful and agonising cry of unmitigated torment? Why does God suffer any one human soul to waste its time in trifles, and to lose itself for ever? Why, if God can save all, does he not save all? Why, if the blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin, does it not cleanse all men from all their sins, without any exception? These are awful and unsounded mysteries. We know just as much of them now as we knew when we first began to study them. Analogies may be quoted, illustrations may be appealed to, but we just comprehend as much of them now as the first enquirers into them did, or the latest will comprehend. All we can say is, that clouds and darkness are round about them, and that these things we now see through a glass darkly.

But let me add, the unhappiness that many Christians feel, arises from their not being satis-

fied with the clearly revealed, the plainly known —and their prying into the unrevealed, which we shall not know now, but are only destined to know hereafter. I do not doubt that, even in this dispensation, progress will be made in discovering the meaning of many of those things which are now inscrutable to us. I have no doubt that progression is being made in the understanding of God's Word, just as progress is being made in excavating facts and phenomena in creation that were hidden before. For instance, what progress has been made (to take one science alone) in astronomy! The same sun that shone on Paradise shines on us; the same Orion, the same Pleiades, that shone on Job, look down upon us still: and yet what a mighty progress has been made, not in the creation, but in the knowledge of these things, from the days of Job to those of Laplace and Newton! And may it not be that, without one addition to the Bible—without one single book added to its contents—we may, in the lapse of years, by investigation, by tracing new and unknown analogies, by greater and yet clearer teaching of the Holy Spirit, come to a conception of truths that are hidden in this blessed

Book, so clear and vivid, that we shall be surprised we did not see them before? What progress has been made in the understanding of the Bible, from the days of Ignatius to those of Augustine—from those of Augustine to those of Calvin—from those of Calvin to the present moment! They have not discovered new truths in the Bible; but they have placed the old truths in new lights, in new bearings, in new relationships, and with a brilliancy and clearness of outline, such as those that preceded them could not perceive. It is this very idea of progress that makes us conclude that the true fathers of the Christian Church are the best Biblical scholars of the nineteenth century. It is a perfect perversion of things to call Ignatius, and Augustine, and Jerome, and Chrysostom, the fathers of the church. The fact is, these excellent men were but the children of the church, and were very much mixed up with childish things; and those divines who have written upon the Bible, and studied it, and have been aided by the Spirit of God, in the nineteenth century, are the true fathers, the only ancients of the Christian Church. Augustine and Chrysostom had but the same Bible; they

had the same intellect, the same throne of grace, the same Holy Spirit that we have. We have all that they had, and in addition, we have the lights of science, the results of patient and protracted inquiry; and the very blunders that they made, are the beacons that keep us from falling into similar errors: so that the presumption is, that we shall have a far clearer exposition of the Bible from the learned and pious men of the nineteenth century, than from those who lived in the dawn, and were less enlightened in the truths of the gospel of Christ. Thus, then, notwithstanding all the darkness that rests on the facts and principles I have indicated, we may, in the lapse of years, and by the blessing of the Spirit of God, see truths that are now partially known far more clearly than we have seen them before, and discover in portions of Scripture that have been neglected or misunderstood, or seen in the mists of prejudice and passion, bright and blessed truths long hidden, but precious and useful to the church.

This seeing of all truths through a glass darkly, and of some truths scarcely at all, should lead us to shrink from dogmatising

where God has not spoken with the greatest plainness. There are some grand, prominent truths in the Bible which rise from the level like the Alps shining in the beams of rising and setting suns, which no man can fail to see, and which even the darkest mind can scarcely misapprehend; but in the interstices or valleys between, there are minor or subordinate truths, partly in the shadow, partly luminous, to be seen only at certain angles, and from certain points of view, on which we should never dogmatise, because Christians equally candid, sincere, and prayerful as ourselves, have seen them differently, and in a different light. And very probably, the reason why we differ in the non-essential truths of the gospel, is that we look at them from different points of view, and through different *media*. I recollect reading the journal of a traveller in a far distant land, in which he states that two friends who were with him stood one on each side of a tree—I forget its name—whose leaves were green on the upper surface, and pure silvery white on the under surface. The wind blew from the one beholder, right in the face of the other, and the under part of the leaf was turned to the

one, while the upper part of the leaf was turned to the other. They disputed and argued for some time, one asserting that the leaves were all white, and the other that they were all green; and it was only when a third interfered that they discovered that the secret of their dispute was the different points of view from which they saw the same object, and that both were right. It is very much so with the subordinate and non-essential truths of the Bible; it is thus that we look at them from different angles, see them from different points of view, through the *media* of prejudice, passion, and prepossession, and differ furiously where we should agree to differ in love. But the great truths of Christianity are so plain, that we should speak of them with no uncertain sound, because all who will open the Bible, and honestly read, ought to see them. On other points that are subordinate, we should never dogmatise, because men must agree to differ about what God has not clearly and plainly revealed. This applies especially to prophecy. If we see through a glass darkly the great truths of the gospel, and the minor truths of ecclesiastical polity, it is still more true that we

see through a glass darkly all unfulfilled prophecy. Knowledge will increase as the end approaches; and we shall be able to interpret Revelation far more clearly as the hour of its accomplishment draws near. On all prophecy that is not yet fulfilled, we cannot speak with too great and tender forbearance. We can see clearly certain great outlines in the future, but the minutiæ predicted in Daniel or the Apocalypse, no man does see in all their details, and no man will see till the very eve of their accomplishment draws near: therefore, if any one should profess to lay down a map of the future just as confidently as he repeats his creed, and assert that he sees the future as plainly as he sees the present or recollects the past, he is looking at the future with a glass that is his own; he does not look through God's glass, for if he looked through it, he would see these things darkly. The fact that he appears to see them otherwise, is evidence that he sees them not at all as they are to be seen. Let us speak of the atonement in terms that cannot be misunderstood; but let us speak of unfulfilled prophecy with humility and with submission,—ever conscious that we may be wrong, ever

admitting that it may possibly be what we misapprehend.

In drawing some practical remarks from these reflections, I may notice that this knowledge in part is an evidence, not of the lowness, but of the greatness of our origin, and the grandeur of our destiny. Animals know all they do know in full; man knows in part. The first impulse would be to infer from this, that animals are more gifted than we; but it is not so. The bee builds its cell in the nineteenth century just as it built it in the first; and the bird constructs its nest to-day just as it will build it while the world lasts. They know all they do know in full; and they know no more in the last years of their existence than they knew in the first. But man knows in part, and the more he knows the more he attempts to know: and that which seems a symptom of his weakness is the evidence of his grandeur; it becomes to him, therefore, the spring of an endless progression —the evidence of a vast capacity of improvement—the foretoken that the glass through which he sees darkly will be broken, and that he shall see all things face to face. This assurance, that we shall see all things as they are, is

the sure hope which acts like an anchor to the soul, and saves it from sinking amid rack, and doubt, and difficulty, and darkness. If I thought that the present cold and misty dawn were to last for ever, I should feel miserable; if I thought that this dark and smoked medium through which I see the things of God and of glory were never to be removed, I should be wretched; but I know that the glass will be removed—that the veil will be rent—that the clouds will be scattered, and, amid the splendours and the noon of everlasting day, what I see now so dimly I shall see face to face.

I believe, in the next place, that this progressive acquaintance with the truths that we know dimly upon earth, and with new truths, in heaven and in the future, that we never knew on earth at all, will constitute much of the joy and the happiness of the saved in glory. When we point out to a child the beauties of a flower, or the exquisite crystallisations of a mineral,—when we indicate to him analogies, affinities, and points of contact he never dreamed of, what ecstasy does that child manifest! how is his mind enchanted, and how does he express his

wonder that he never knew or saw these things before! But why did he not know them before? Not because they were not, but because his mind was not large enough in its capacity to comprehend them. We notice, too, in men of ripe age, what ecstasy they feel in adding to their stock of knowledge. The student will traverse arctic snows, and stormy seas, and burning deserts, and leave all man loves at home, and face all man dreads abroads, in order to find a new plant, or to become acquainted with a new mineral—or to see an eclipse, or planetary transit, from a new position—or to register a new phenomenon—or to do something that will add to the bulk and splendour of that knowledge which is every day increasing in the midst of us! What joy does it give him to catch a gleam of an undiscovered truth! what ecstasy when he has made the discovery! And what is all this but a foretaste of that joy and rapture which we shall feel in the realms of the blessed, when we shall no more see these things through a glass darkly?

What humility should this fact that now we see darkly, teach us! How little do we really know—how much remains to be known—how

truly is that sentiment which bids us walk humbly with our God enforced in all this! God gives us to see even the truths that save us through a glass darkly.

What charity should this truth teach! How slow should we be to condemn a brother—how little should we feel of irritation or exasperation of mind because he differs from us—how should we try to teach him the more excellent way, knowing that we ourselves were once in error—how should we agree to differ in things that are not vital, when both of us see through a glass darkly, and may see through very different *media!*

What contentment should this teach us,—to be satisfied to see through a glass darkly, knowing that the day comes when we shall see face to face! Let us, therefore, anticipate that blessed day. We are saved, says the Apostle, by hope, and that hope is, that the day comes, when all will be luminous—when every mystery shall be penetrated by a new splendour—when the things that lie in the shadow shall be placed in the sunshine—when the veil shall be rent, and the films and the scales shall be removed from our eyes, and we shall be "satisfied," for

we shall see God face to face, and we shall be like him, for we shall see Him as He is.

Let us rejoice in this, that "blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God; and if we are in the number of those whose hearts have been renewed, whose minds have been enlightened, who are made, by that blessed Spirit, pure in heart, let us rejoice that we shall see Him just as he is. In the meantime let us make the best use of what we do know, instead of prying into what we cannot know. Let us apply heartily, and throughout the whole range of our life, what we do know. One truth of God's Word, turned into life, and impressed on our walk, our heart, our consciences, and our relations to society, may be infinitely more precious than twenty truths speculated on, or intellectually studied, or curiously pried into. Let us, therefore, pray that those truths that we do know we may be enabled practically to follow, and prayerfully to use. That man who puts into action the whole of the truth that he does know, is the very man to whom God will reveal more clearly the thing that he does not know. This do we know, "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth from all Sin." "He

that knew no sin was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God by Him." "He bare our sins in His own body on the tree." This we do know, that we are invited to come unto Him, weary and heavy laden as we are, and He will give us rest. And this we do know, that "except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

May these truths be not only light, but life, to us! may they be not only sounds that reverberate in the ear, or sights that charm the eye, but living seeds that germinate in the heart!

CHAPTER XIII.

THE INHERITANCE.

"So live, that when thy summons comes, to join
The innumerable caravan, that moves
To that mysterious realm where each shall take
His chamber in the silent halls of death,
Thou go not like the quarry slave at night,
Scourged to his dungeon, but sustain'd and soothed
By an unfaltering trust. Approach thy grave
Like one who wraps the drapery of his couch
About him, and lies down to pleasant dreams."

"Giving thanks unto the Father, which has made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light."—Col. i. 12.

In the verse I have quoted from Colossians we have, first of all, a description of the rest that remains for the people of God, under the beautiful and instructive epithet, "the inheritance." We have next the characteristic of that inheritance—the "inheritance of the saints in light." We have then the names of those who

are appointed to be partakers of that inheritance —"saints." We have also their character— "meet." Who hath made us meet [fit, adapted] to be partakers of the inheritance of the "saints in light." We also see the Author of it all, who has created the inheritance, and lighted it up with all its glory; who hath also made them that enter it meet, or adapted, for the inheritance of the saints in light; namely, God the Father and our Father.

This description of the future rest, namely, "the inheritance," reveals to us the nature of that heaven to which we aspire. Every man hopes to get to heaven, as the popular expression has it; but few men consider what heaven is, and what they are who have any reasonable hope of entering heaven.

"The inheritance," is an expression that denotes no merit in those that enter it: they do not obtain it by toil, by labour, or by purchase; it is not something that a servant earns, for then it would be wages; nor something that a soldier achieves, for then it would be reward or trophy; nor something that a purchaser bargains for in the market, for then it would be the result of a price; but it is something which

a son, a relative *inherits*. The very name precludes all idea of merit; and thus, if heaven be not a purchase, nor a reward, nor a trophy, but an inheritance, it looks as though the inscription, "By the deeds of the law no man can be justified," were woven out of the beams of the coming glory, and legible upon the very threshold and door-posts of the gate that leads to it. A place is inherited by relationship alone. The title of a prince or a noble, and his dignities and estates, may or may not be deserved, but yet they are inherited by his son. The son may be unworthy, but he is nevertheless the heir; and the idea, therefore, which is meant to be conveyed here is, that this heaven is meant for those who are the relations of God—those who are called the sons of God—the "heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ," who are said to have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby they cry, Abba, Father. If it be so, before we can indulge a well-founded hope that we shall be happy for ever, we must first ascertain by clear reasoning, by plain Scripture, that we are what are here called the sons of God. It is not enough to be just, generous, amiable, affectionate sons—to be domestic men, affectionate

fathers—honourable, benevolent. All this you should be, but all this you may be, and not be the sons of God. Now, it is a very solemn thought that either I am a son of God, and the heir of a kingdom that never can be moved; or I have no lot or part in this matter at all. There is no intermediate spot that one can occupy. We cannot say, "I am not, indeed, a son of God, but then I am not an heir of misery." One or other you must be; and whatever be the separation that divides you in human society, whether rich or poor, or learned or ignorant, there are really and truly but two clearly defined classes on earth—those who have the Spirit of adoption, and are the sons of God; and those who are aliens and strangers, without God and without Christ, and without hope in the world.

If we be the sons of God, the fact that it is our Father's home, that it is for relatives,—and that those who have preceded us and pre-occupied that place are, because the sons of God, our brethren—casts a home-like aspect over the realms of glory; and thus, when we enter that blessed land, we shall not mingle with strangers whom we have never known, but be re-united with those happy and rejoicing

bands who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, and therefore are before the throne, serving Him day and night without ceasing.

But let us try to ascertain some of the distinctive marks of this inheritance, as they are delineated in various parts of the Word of God, before we study the grand characteristics of those who are to enter it,—namely, meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light. By referring to another Apostle we shall find this inheritance described in these words, "An inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you." Here, then, are its features. First, this inheritance, to which we aspire, into which so many say they hope to enter, but into which the sons of God alone will be admitted, is described as an inheritance that is incorruptible. What a lofty attribute is this! All things that we see here are tainted by corruption; the ark on which the glory shone has mouldered into dust; the overshadowing cherubim that were over the mercy-seat are utterly decayed; Aaron's rod, that for many years miraculously budded, is now unprolific dust scattered to the winds;

the sublime temple of Jerusalem, the residence of a present God—the palace of the great King—had not one stone left standing upon another that has not been cast down; great cities have passed away like a vision,—Palmyra, Babylon with its walls, Thebes with its hundred gates, Egypt with its ancient greatness, Nineveh with its glory, all corruptible in their nature, are now corrupted, and scarce a wreck of them remains; our corn grows, our vines wave, our feet tread upon the *débris* of fallen nations upon the wreck and mouldering dust of the boasted magnificence of ancient days: but this inheritance is not corruptible, there is no taint of corruption in it; it is pure, holy, perfect as the God that created it. It is also called "undefiled." It *is* undefiled; there is no sin in or on it. The breath of sin has blighted the loveliest things that are upon the earth, and the trail of the serpent may be traced amid the most fragrant and beautiful flowers; but this inheritance is undefiled. The best titles that are possessed by the princes of this world, when traced back a few hundred years, are found to have been secured by the sword before they were perpetuated by the pen; but this inheritance has never been

the arena of force, and it will never be the scene or subject of fraud; it is an inheritance into which nothing that is defiled ever hath entered; and therefore it is added, "it fadeth not away;" literally, it is amaranthine, it has everlasting spring, it bears a perpetual bloom; no sere leaf nor autumn tint is there—there is not a single sign or token of decay: it is the only thing prepared as a home for God's people that does not fade away. "Our fathers, where are they? and the prophets, do they live for ever?" "The heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat;" but that bright, that holy, that happy spot provided for your home and my home is undefiled, it fadeth not away; it is reserved, says the Apostle, in heaven. It is too beautiful for the eyes of unsanctified man to behold; it would be too tempting to Satan, like Paradise of old, if it were now manifested on the earth—it is kept in some quiet and sunny nook in the mighty universe of God, far above all assault or taint, contamination or decay; and it will be found, I doubt not, when we enter, far above all that eye has seen, or ear has heard, or the heart of man has conceived.

One other feature of it I notice, and it is the feature our bleesed Lord gives. He says, "Come, ye blessed of my Father; inherit the kingdom prepared for you:" there is only a variety of expression; it is the same inheritance —"the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." In other words, this inheritance is a place prepared for the people of God; it is evidence of the love of Jesus, that he came from the throne of glory, bore our aches and pains, and sins and sorrows, redeemed us by his blood, and bequeathed us his righteousness to justify us; but it is no less an evidence of his love that he spends the day that now rushes by, not in receiving the acclamations of adoring angels, but in preparing a place for the people of God. "I go," says the Saviour, "to prepare a place for you." It is a touching proof of the greatness of his love that he died for us; it is scarcely less so that he does nothing but live for us. Thus, the more we study the love of Christ, the more clearly we form a conception of the justice of that language which declares that in height, in depth, in length, and in breadth, it passeth all understanding.

This inheritance, in the next place, which I

have described as being prepared in heaven and reserved for the people of God, is described as an "inheritance in light." We are here not in the darkness of the lost, nor are we in the noonday of heaven. We occupy that intermediate twilight which is a mixture of light and shadow —onward and upward to the end: but in this inheritance into which we hope to enter, all shadows shall flit away and disappear for ever; all seeming discrepancies that are now detected in the Scriptures shall be cleared up and harmonised; all doubts and fears and forebodings shall be exiles from it for ever; prophecy that now lies in the mystery of twilight, all but inscrutable to us, shall then be seen in noonday splendour,—having unbosomed itself into blessed and everlasting performance; mysteries that are impenetrable now shall then be luminous. Whatever the telescope detects in the heights; whatever the microscope discovers in the depths; whatever is too vast for our comprehension; whatever is too minute for our inspection; shall then lie in the broad intense light in which there is no shadow, and we shall see face to face, and no more through a glass darkly.

Having thus looked at the inheritance, let us study the qualification required in those who are to enter it. First, they are called saints. I do not know a word in the Bible that has occasioned more dispute, or that has been the cause of more misapprehension than that same word saint. If we ask a member of the Church of Rome, he will tell us the saints are those whose cases were investigated by the Pope fifty years after they were dead, and of whom it was proved that they wrought miracles, underwent enormous self-torture, were first beatified by the bishop of the diocese, and ultimately canonised, and enrolled in the sacred calendar by the Pope himself. If you ask those who are in the twilight between Protestant truth and Papal error, they will tell you that the saints are those distinguished men who have rendered great services to the church, and by consent of the church universal have been enrolled in the number of the blessed. If you ask many a worldly man what a saint is, he will tell you it means a fanatic, an enthusiast, or some great pretender ; but if you ask that Book which settles all controversy, and puts great pretensions into little bulk, and speaks plainly where

man thinks so obscurely, it will be found that a saint is not one canonised by popes, or to whose name the word saint is prefixed as a sort of aristocratic title, indicating a lordly position in the realms of glory; that saints are not those whose saintship, even when analysed with the greatest charity, is extremely apocryphal; but those that are so, not by worldly titles, not by human nomenclature, but by a Divine creation, the regeneration of the Spirit of God; and that these saints are not confined to a sect, nor are their bright names the monopoly of a narrow creed and of a narrow heart; but are in every church and sect, and denomination of the church universal. They are composed, not of Episcopalians, Presbyterians, or Independents; but of those who have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, and follow Him on earth, or serve him day and night in glory. In other words, each person who reads this page is either a saint or an unconverted, unredeemed, unsanctified sinner. There is no medium between a saint—heir of the inheritance—and the sinner who is without God, and without a well-founded hope in the world. Hence every Epistle begins "To the Saints at

Philippi," that is, to the Christians. The literal translation of the word is "the holy ones," holy persons, holy by renewal of heart, holy in life and walk.

These saints, thus defined, are declared to be "partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." This is a blessed fact. As the saintship that is here described is not the monopoly of any party, so that blessed heaven, that glorious inheritance to which we are moving, is not the monopoly of a few, it is not the narrow country that is fitted for the narrow-minded members of a narrow sect. It is that bright land, of the inhabitants of which it is declared in the Apocalypse, there "is a great multitude, whom no man could number." I think nobody can doubt that reads the Scriptures as a whole, that the result of this dispensation will be, that the vast majority of the human family will be saved. I indulge the hope, and I indulge it on the basis of God's Holy Word, that heaven will not have a little company, but a great multitude whom no man can number; the song of the blessed will not be a solo; the future rest of the people of God will not be a solitude; our joys will not be the less intense that they are reciprocated by

many, and our songs will not be the less musical that they shall be the combined harmony of many voices: and so the harmony of the song and the grandeur of the scene will be augmented a thousand-fold, by the multitude of them that share in the splendour of the one, and echo the notes of the other.

The inheritance of the saints in light is the bright prospect. The question of deepest importance to me is—"Am I an inheritor of it? —am I a saint?" This leads me, therefore, to notice the feature here described, which is of very great importance,—namely, that they are "meet," or fit, or adapted to, "Who hath made us meet;" persons between whom and the inheritance there is some harmony or adaptation. Now, we are sometimes so prone to rest upon the doctrine of our justification before God (and we cannot rest too strongly upon it) that we merge or give a too subordinate place to the sister doctrine of fitness for the kingdom of heaven. There are two things requisite in every man that will enter heaven, and these are, that he shall have a title which is nothing in him, nothing done by him, nothing suffered by him, nothing paid by him, but the finished

righteousness, the perfect sacrifice of the Son of God in our room and stead; and next, as we shall see from the nature of the case, a *fitness* for heaven, without which the *title* would be of no use to him that has it. If, therefore, we thank God that He has made us accepted in the Beloved, we shall also be taught, if we comprehend the doctrine I am trying to explain aright, to thank God that He has, in addition to this, made us meet or fit for the inheritance of the saints in light. We see this doctrine taught, or if not taught, at least indicated, and inferred by some of the commonest analogies of the world. We find throughout the whole of God's created world every creature, it matters not what it be, fitted for the place it is to occupy, or the sphere in which it is to live and move and gather its food. The bird, for instance, under the survey of the most superficial anatomist, proves itself fitted for the air; the fish needs but a casual inspection to show that it is adapted to swim in the river or in the sea; the ox and the horse show that they are graminivorous, and made to browse upon the grass of our hills and valleys; and man proves by his structure that he is made for all climes, and all

countries, and all circumstances, having powers of adaptation in this world much greater and more flexible than those of any other animal, indicating by his physical organisation the power, grandeur, and original dignity of his nature. But man, with his present physical organisation, as anybody knows who is acquainted with the elements of astronomy, could not live in another planet. If, with his present apparatus of senses, he were to be transported to Jupiter, or to Venus, or to Saturn, or Mercury, he could live upon any of these; for in the one the atmosphere would be too dense, and in the other attraction too powerful: so that it would be impossible for an inhabitant of this planet to live, breathe, or exist in any other planet in the whole universe of God. We see, then, in these simple facts, evidence plain enough that adaptation to the place the creature is to fill is the great law of universal existence; and if it be true that we are by nature unfit for the kingdom of heaven—that we are by nature dead, lost, sinful, at enmity, as unwilling to go near God as we are unfit to approach God—then what is that text—"Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God," but

the announcement of the fact that the future inhabitant of heaven must be made fit for the inheritance he is to enter on, or the destiny he is to occupy? Oh! if we felt that that heaven is an infinitely holy place, that man must be in heart, and nature, and sympathy, made meet to enter it, the unscriptural dogma of Baptismal Regeneration would not be dreamed of, or soberly discussed by learned prelates and great theologians; for to suppose that the sprinkling of water on the brow can make a man dead in sins fit for the realm of happiness, and light, and glory, and blessedness, is the grossest misconception of what Christianity is, and the grossest delusion about what man is, and the most dangerous, too, that can be palmed upon mankind. Let us take a step here, and you will see that the whole education of the child on earth at this moment is the apprenticeship, if I may so speak, of that child, in order that he may occupy and duly fill the sphere he is to have in this life. Let it be a profession for which the youth is trained, or let it be a trade to which he serves his apprenticeship, the idea is impressed upon him by the very nature of his position, that if he spend his time in idle-

ness he will not excel, or probably be admitted into that profession; if he spend his time in other pursuits, he will not be able to take his place as a tradesman in that trade. It is the great law of the condition under which we are placed, that men must be fitted for the navy who are to guide our ships to victory—others for the army who are to command our victorious troops, and carry the roll of England's conquering drums to the utmost ends of the world. Man must be educated in the knowledge and use of the medicine that he is to prescribe with success; and for law who is to argue and gain the victory; and for the ministry who is to bring forth things new and old, and make himself useful to the minds and hearts of the people committed to his charge. Just in the same manner, and by the application of the same analogy, we must be made meet or fit for the kingdom of heaven here upon earth, or we never can cherish the idea of entering it hereafter at all.

Lose, then, the opportunity that now passes, and you lose the inheritance, it may be for ever. Fritter away in idle frivolities the precious hours that sweep past with the speed of the lightning

beam, and you miss the tide that carries you to heaven; you lose the opportunity when you might have been accepted, and you live hereafter, not the heir of the inheritance, but a hopeless and unhappy sufferer.

Entering into heaven is not a leap, it is not the result of a projectile force that flings you from the place you love into a place that you know nothing about. Entrance into heaven is the result of a process, the end of a career that begins in time and culminates in glory—the coronal around the brow of him who has striven and obtained the mastery. Nay, more, we pass through heaven in order to go to heaven; we must pass through hell in order to get to hell; the gates of Paradise and the pit of perdition open from every man's hut, and from every man's home. He that carries not in his heart the bud of heaven, shall never see the full blossom; he that has not now an augury and a foretaste of the realms of glory, never, as far as his present position indicates his future destiny, can expect to be admitted into that state into which only those who are meet and fit are admitted in the fulness of the times. Never, then, let us forget this, that the instant

we are born we commence the descent downward and downward; and the instant we are born again, the current is reversed, the tide is changed, and we begin the upward ascent, from grace to grace, till we appear before God in glory.

We must have some knowledge of heaven, some experience of its light, and its life, and its happiness, and its joy here, if ever we are to expect to enter it, and enjoy it fully hereafter. Let us, then, examine ourselves. Are we the sons of God? Have we any taste for heaven? What would be the use of taking a peasant from the plough upon the hill-side, and introducing that peasant into the loftiest circles of the cultivated and the great? He would be most unhappy; he would be far happier in his own cottage; but this is but a small thing with which to compare great things. Were it possible that an unsanctified, unconverted man, who thinks of nothing but money, or politics, or of trade, and of retiring with a fortune, and who, in short, toils and drudges from morning till night with one consuming and absorbing aim—either to be rich or great, to be lifted by some mighty force into this inheritance, he

could not breathe its air, nor gaze at its splendour; his heart would not beat under its atmosphere, he could not exist in its society. It would be so intolerable a curse to him that he would prefer to go to his own place, for his torment would only be aggravated by the contrast with the glory, the beauty, the perfection of those amid whom he would be accidentally cast.

Thus I have tried to show what this meetness for the kingdom of heaven is; and to impress on you, my reader, and on myself, not separating myself from you, that unless this great change pass on us, we cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven. We all know, that more of happiness is within than without. Take a Christian who knows that the everlasting God is his Father; who knows this one truth that Paul has taught, in the 8th chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, that nothing "shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord;" plunge that saint in the very depths of hell, and he will have a little sweet and sun-lit heaven in his own bosom, that will neutralise all the elements and curse around him. In

every case in this life, even, we know that happiness does not spring from the acres that are around us—the great and ceiled rooms that we occupy—but from within. A sanctified peasant in a cottage, and with a small potato-field, is a happy man. A coroneted noble, with his patrimonial acres, that he cannot count or measure, and all the ministry of servants, faithful and attached, without the peace of God in his conscience, is a poor and unhappy man. It is within that heaven is; and if it be not created within, nothing can reflect it upon us with any effect from without. If one is in bad health, we know that everything about him seems to get the tinge of his illness and to mar enjoyment; but if one be in good health, why, a brown common looks glorious, and the very desert seems to him to blossom like the rose. Let a man in good health, and with a happy spirit, look out upon nature, and all nature waves with his smiles, reflects his joy, and shows everything bright and beautiful, because the man who looks upon it is so. But let an unhappy man look upon Paradise itself, and upon all the grandeur of the widest and the noblest panorama, and he will hear his own

sighs in the singing of the birds, and his own groans in the chimes of streams; and he will feel reflected back upon him, and rushing perpetually unto him, his own sad melancholy, from all created things that the eye rests upon.

Heaven must be within before we can ever taste or enter into heaven without. To be born is the commencement of our downward career; to be born again, as I have told you, is the commencement of our upward and our best career. You have an illustration of this—to illustrate again a great thing by a small one—in the butterfly; and if the aged do not receive any instruction from the symbol, the young may. The butterfly is born, if I may use the expression, a caterpillar—an unsightly, grovelling earth-worm, fitted to crawl upon the earth, but never, apparently, to rise off it, or go beyond it; but by and by that butterfly is born again, a beautiful thing, with golden wings, that floats in the air, and sparkles with beauty and splendour in perpetual sunshine. Now, here you have man's earthly state, fitted for the earth, and to grovel on the earth. He undergoes a change, of which the change in that butterfly is but a dim and shadowy type, till he

is fitted to ascend and soar, until he seats himself and sings with the cherubim beside the throne of God. Each of us is now in the first state by nature; each may be in the second state by grace.

This leads me now to notice the author of the great change necessary to fit us for the kingdom of heaven—"giving thanks to the Father, who hath made us meet." Throughout the Scripture, the triune God is represented as having distinct offices:—God the Father is electing love; God the Son, redeeming love; and God the Spirit, sanctifying and effective love; yet Jude says, "Sanctified by God the Father." Perhaps the idea is this, that the instant a Christian is born again, he is fit for the kingdom of heaven; but if there be different places, and different dignities, and different degrees of glory and of happiness in the future, as I believe there are, then he that has made greatest progress in conformity to Christ will occupy the loftiest place in that inheritance that remains for the people of God. The moment that a child is born, it is fit to live in this world; but the man who has attained full manhood is far more fitted to live in it, as he

comes into it with more manifold relations, and is able for the discharge of duties of which, of course, the babe is utterly incapable. In like manner, the moment that a man is really converted, really renewed by the Spirit of God, he is then, if he were to die, fit for the kingdom of heaven; but if he be spared, he grows in grace, develops new features, makes progress in conformity to Christ, until he is called to exchange grace for glory, and time for an endless eternity.

None, I believe, are ever perfectly holy in this life. There is no man who is not necessitated to say, at the last pulse that his heart beats, as well as at the first:—"If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us; but if we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." For instance, men were saved by Christ before Christ's work was completed on the cross. And may it not be true, that we shall be pronounced fit for heaven by His Spirit, before the Spirit's work in us is perfectly completed? In the faith that Christ would complete His work, sinners of old were saved; and so in the faith

that the Spirit will perfect that which concerneth us, and make us perfectly holy, that we may be perfectly happy, we shall be made meet here for an entrance into the kingdom of heaven.

If Christ is gone to prepare a place for us in the kingdom of heaven, He takes time to do so. The Spirit of God is come down to prepare us for the kingdom of heaven, and he takes time to do so too; and the Spirit of God will no more leave off His work of fitting His people for heaven, than the Saviour would have left off His work before He finished all that the Father had given Him to do. Our souls in our bodies are now undergoing that process of perfection which our bodies soon shall undergo in the grave, in order to fit the resuscitated body, in all its resurrection glory, for the sanctified and holy soul in all its heavenly and divine beauty.

Thus, God the Father fits us, by His Spirit, for the inheritance of the saints in light. Let me put this meetness before the reader, in two or three plain, practical questions. What are evidences of fitness for the kingdom of heaven? Not the least is love to the Bible, and delight in

it. The man is a fool that speaks disrespectfully of the Bible; surely he never read it who talks of it as inferior in grandeur, in literary beauty and excellence, to any of the productions of man: and he has never felt his want of a Saviour, or the effects of the truths of the gospel, who does not appreciate and love that blessed book. It is the map of the inheritance —it is the road-book to heaven; and if our hearts, and our treasure, and our hopes, and our prospects, are there, we shall not fail to study the map, we shall often refer to the road-book, lest we miss the way and lose the boon to which we are travelling.

If we are at all meetening for this inheritance, we shall love the house of God. We shall love the house of God, not for its architectural beauty, not for the eloquence of the preacher, not because of the elegancy of the forms, but because our minds are enlightened by the preacher, God's word is there made plainer to us, deep impressions are struck upon our hearts, and bright hopes are kindled in our souls, and God meets us there, and makes us say from happy hearts, "It was good for us to be there." If we are preparing, then, and

ripening for that kingdom, we shall love the house of God: if we are being made meet for that inheritance, we shall also sympathise with the cause and with the kingdom of Christ. Our whole thoughts will not be about literature or science, our whole mind will not be absorbed by the cares, the toils, the anxieties of the world. We are made, of course, to be in the world, to take our place in its duties, and never to shrink from them: but we are made also in the world to have in our hearts the spot of sunshine that connects us and ties us to another, a better and a happier world.

If, then, we are the people of God, and being made meet for that blessed state, we shall be anxious to hear of Missionary success, we shall rejoice to learn that the cause and the kingdom of Christ are prospering; we shall weep when Christians weep, and rejoice when Christians rejoice, and look upon the spread of pure, undefiled religion, as God's greatest blessing bestowed upon mankind.

We shall also love the Sabbath. The rest which remaineth for the people of God is, literally translated, (Σαββατισμὸς,) a Sabbath-keeping for the people of God. If I address

any one anticipating a Mahometan elysium, or a Pagan heaven, he may be assured he is utterly mistaken. What we shall have in the future inheritance is an everlasting, a ceaseless Sabbath—Sabbath-keeping, worship, communion, fellowship, life, light, joy, happiness.

Do you love the Sabbath upon earth? do you hail the dawn of the Sabbath as the day on which you cast off Mammon's chains, and shut your ears to the din and roaring of the wheels of this terrible and intensely commercial world? that enables you to open your heart to better thoughts, and your eyes to a brighter vision, and your ears to strains divine—the tidings of an inheritance, incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away?

Finally, if we are looking for this inheritance, and are prepared to enter it, we shall give thanks to the Father, who hath made us meet. We made ourselves unfit; God alone can make us fit. God the Creator made us; It is God the Father that re-makes us. By the first act we were made creatures; by the second act we are made new creatures, sons of God, and heirs of Christ. And if we have hearts thus ripening for the rest that comes—if we have souls thus

being made meet by the presence of heaven for the full enjoyment of heaven, then we shall not only be holier men, but, what those who do not know Christianity suspect and question, far happier men. There will then be a joy spread over our spirit as we walk with God, who is the fount of joy; we shall be raised above the region of storms, and placed amid the sunshine of the blessed; we shall meet death, when death comes, heroically. There is not one face that gazes on this page that within a few years shall not be cold and mouldering in the tomb; and there is not one body in this generation in which there is not a soul that shall live for ever in eternal joy, or writhe for ever in misery it has prepared for itself. What a thought! What earnestness, what anxiety, what inquiry should such thoughts create within us! And yet, how little do we think of this! how little do we feel this! If we felt aright, would it make us miserable? No. If I am fit for the inheritance, then I meet death, not as the suspension of the continuity of my life, but as the consecrated messenger of Heaven that cuts the cords that bind me to mortality, and helps me, like the insect I have referred to, to unfurl new and

glorious wings, and to rise and soar, until I am placed beyond the shadows and the sorrows of mortality and of time.

And now, my dear reader, let me ask you again as I close, Have you any reason to believe that you are going to heaven? It is a plain question; answer it plainly; answer it for yourself as in the sight of God. Every swing of the pendulum carries every moment a soul to eternity. If we had eyes to see what is now invisible, and ears to hear what is now inaudible, we should see the whole atmosphere that we breathe loaded with immortal souls, rushing from their wrecked bodies to the presence of God; and we shall hear constantly the crash of the archangel's trumpet as they were gathered to the seat of doom, to receive their everlasting sentence. The stumbling of his horse, the other year, let loose from its tenement of clay the most celebrated and accomplished statesman of the age. Our life is a shadow. Its continuance has no guarantee for a single day: the soul is ever ready to escape. The youngest does not know that he may not be summoned the next minute; and with respect to the aged of sixty, seventy, eighty, my dear brother, my

dear father, every beat of your heart is the curfew-bell that tells you that the day is closing, and the night is coming, when all the fires of human passion should be quenched, and you should compose your souls for the rest of the people of God.

CHAPTER XIV.

SPENT AND MIS-SPENT.

"It is a season for the quiet thought
And the still reckoning with thyself. The year
Gives back the spirits of its dead, and time
Whispers the history of its vanish'd hours,
And the heart, calling its affections up,
Counteth its wasted ingots. Life stands still,
And settles like a fountain, and the eye
Sees clearly through its depths, and noteth all
That stirr'd its troubled waters."

"The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved."—JER. viii. 20.

PERHAPS the words of the prophet standing at the head of this chapter, may have reference to a merely temporal deliverance. Nevertheless, they may be fairly applied, as in all probability they also actually refer, to a spiritual and an eternal salvation. The words embody the deep expression of agony which is often felt by those who have seen successive

opportunities of spiritual improvement spent and mis-spent; or lingering for a season beside them, and afterwards discover, when too late, their souls unblest, their controversy with God unsettled, and their everlasting prospects dark and ominous. In such circumstances, the prophet hears some one exclaim—"The harvest, when the corn might be gathered in—the summer, when the earth might have been expected to wave with promise, are past; and the great end for which still shine the summer suns, and wave the golden fruits of autumn—the safety of our souls—our fitness for appearing before God—is as much in the background as at any previous period of our life." The words I have quoted are a commentary upon "too late." "Too late" cannot be said at the close of last year, but many may have to utter it at the close of life—more to utter it in no less bitter agony at the close of this dispensation, when it may be "too late" to pray—"too late" to repent—"too late" for heaven, and only not too late for eternal and irreparable exile from the joy and the presence of the Lord. There are but two great results of this life which are of real, permanent, and solemn importance—these

are "saved" or "unsaved." "Saved" or "not saved" is true of every man. Whatever else, reader, you may be, or in whatever circumstances you may be placed, you too this moment are a saved man, or not saved at all. In other words, you are at this very moment either a a son of God and an heir of glory, or a child of the world and an heir—a deserving heir—of everlasting misery. One or other each of us is. Life is the most solemn position in which man can be placed. There is no such thing as an intermediate position of being neither saved nor lost. There is no intermediate character between one who is altogether a Christian, or not a Christian at all. This is a very solemn thought; it is a thought that should make me and you think: it ought to provoke in the depth of every man's soul the question—Is Christianity anything to me? am I interested in Christianity? Has the gospel touched and transformed me by its power? or has it left me just where sin and Satan and the world left me? "saved or unsaved," whether interesting to us or not, interests the inhabitants of both worlds. Patriarchs, prophets, apostles, evangelists, write of this as the burden of their inspiration; the

angels in glory are interested in the conflict, for there is joy with them over one sinner saved. The fiends in hell are interested in the conflict, for they "go about seeking whom they may devour." "Saved or unsaved," should be the substance of our retrospect of the past—it should be the substance of our prospect for the future. No result can be compared to salvation. Some have become rich, others poor, in the past year. Some have felt disease, others have escaped it unscathed. These are not unimportant results; these are reasons for submission or thankfulness to God: but all these put together are not to be compared for one moment with that ultimate result which absorbs all and supersedes all, and in weight and magnificence eclipses all. "Am I saved—a Christian? or am I not saved, and not a Christian?" It is salvation that gives importance to days, to months, to years. It is the chiefest of the Voices of the Night. It is that for which we are here spared; it is the explanation of our protracted life—of our deliverance from disease—of our health and strength.

There are seasons constantly occurring in this world which are fitted for attaining great and

good temporal results, and which, if allowed to pass away unseized and unimproved, cannot be recalled. We cannot complain that this is so arranged in the special case of the safety of the soul. It is the law that runs through the whole universe, and gives consistency and unity to all the operations of Deity. Are you about to learn a trade? there is an apprenticeship required, during which you must master all its details, and become acquainted with all its processes. Idle away the period of apprenticeship, and at the end of it you have not learned your trade. The harvest, in such a case, is past, the summer is ended, and the trade is not learned. If a profession is to be learned—let that profession be law or medicine—the army or the navy—there is preparation required—hard, painstaking study and attention: neglect this, and you are utterly unfitted and unprepared for your profession. So in the great battle of life which every man has to fight; there are crises which decide the issues of eternity. At the battle of Waterloo there was a crisis in the tactics and arrangements of the field, which the eagle eye of the great British commander saw, and which made him exclaim, "This will do!"—simple, but

significant words. If he had lost that moment —if he had not seized it the instant it was at his feet—the battle had been lost—the destiny of England had been changed, and the fate of Europe had been otherwise also. There are moments in the battle of life that rush past us, pregnant with vast results, which seized, may be the turning-points of our everlasting safety; whereas, if we let them go, the harvest will be past, the summer will be ended, and we shall not be saved.

There is a season every man knows, called spring, when we must sow; if we do not sow in spring, there will be no bud in the summer, nor blossom in autumn, nor precious fruit gathered in for the winter. No one complains of this law; nor can any one deny it. It is a law that develops itself in the narrowest plot of ground that is attached to the humblest cottage, that if there be no sowing in spring—no cultivation of the soil—or laborious attention on the part of the husbandman, there will be no summer blossom, and no autumn fruit. Nobody complains of this law—we accept it as one of the fixed ordinances of Heaven; and if we have not learned lessons from it, the blame is

not due to the great Creator, but wholly to us.

I have thus indicated analogies illustrative of the subject under review—analogies plain, decided, invariable, and significant of corresponding moral laws. Let, for instance, the apprenticeship be spent in idleness, and the trade is not learned. Let the midshipman drink, smoke, read the newspapers—let the young soldier study dress, read novels, and neglect his profession—and the one will never be a seaman creditable to his country, and the other will never be a soldier likely to prove an accession to the service. If we neglect the advantage that now presents itself for bettering our circumstances in life, another advantage may occur; but the one we have lost never can recur, and no subsequent opportunity may be equal to our requirement. The tide is lost; the train is gone; you are too late; the summer is ended, the harvest is past, and all is irrecoverable. In a higher sense these truths are applicable. There are seasons peculiarly appropriate for thinking, and for thinking with effect, about God—the soul—eternity. There are occasions in the lapse of years, in the ex-

perience of life, so precious, that upon them, as upon fulcra, depend the issues of heaven and hell. There are moments in our experience as immortal beings, which, if lost, are lost for ever, and we with them. There is nothing that we need to learn or to feel more profoundly than this, that whenever an opportunity occurs, be it what it may, of receiving a new truth, of drinking in a deeper and a more solemn impression, we ought not to let it pass unimproved or unsanctified, but to grasp it, to pray over it, that it may be consecrated to the glory of God, and to the good of our souls. Let me specify some of these occasions. I have mentioned the period given us for preparing for a profession—apprenticeship given us for preparing for a trade, and seed-time our preparation for the autumn. Let us now look at the periods in our life when such preparation may be made as will enable us to exclaim, The summer has come to an end, the harvest is past, and we feel, and feel with joy and reverence, that we are saved!

The first period I will specify is the delightful and the susceptible season of youth. All Scripture is eloquent with observations upon the advantages of early piety—of religion re-

ceived, felt, and practised in that spring-time. Youth is highly sensitive and receptive. Impressions that are made upon the young not only strike the deepest, but in every instance they last the longest; so that the aged man recollects the lessons of his youth when he has forgotten those of his maturer manhood. The first thought of love or of hate that is imbibed by a child, casts a bright light or a dark shadow over all the future of his pilgrimage upon earth. Whatever is learned and felt when we are young is learned most thoroughly and felt most deeply, and is spread far into our years, and rarely fails to give a strong colouring and shape to much of our future life. Now, if the season of youth, from seven to twenty, pass by without receiving, deep, sacred, Christian impressions, I do not say that no other season will occur in which you may believe, and believing live for ever, but I do say, that such a season as that you have lost will never come round again; at no period will your heart be so open—your power of receiving truth so intense; at no after age will the heart be capable of receiving so deep and thorough an impression. The cares, the anxieties, and the troubles

of this life, will too soon tread down the softest sensibilities of the heart, till it becomes almost case-hardened to everything but the calls of Mammon and the impressions of the world around you. But in the season of youth all is bright before us, all is hopeful within us, and the whole heart accessible and open. The shadows of the mind are very much like those of the body. In the morning of life the shadows are behind us, in the noon of life we trample them under foot, in the evening of life they stretch, long, broad, and deep, into eternity before us. Let pass away the bright season of youth, and the probabilities are diminished, to use the language of this world, of your receiving saving impressions. You have lost an opportunity that will never recur. You are less likely now to feel as you would have felt in earlier days, less likely, after each instance of refusal or neglect, to embrace hereafter that gospel which sanctifies all that know it, and saddens none, and, if possible, adds to the splendours, while it detracts from the dangers of the rising sun of youth.

There is a season, too, which may be called our summer, and that is the season when we

take, as we often must do, if we are rational and reflective men, retrospects and reviews of all that is behind us; when we look back upon the outs and ins and windings of life, when the sense of sin saddens us, when the enjoyment of mercies makes us grateful, or a view of the vanity of all things tends to detach us from the world. Those times when we leave the beaten highway of public life, and turn aside to the by-ways, and nooks, and sequestered spots of private life, to meditate, to think, to ponder, are fraught with momentous effects; these are moments when the thought that should be deepest and dearest ought to be embraced and held fast. Those moments of thought are the mothers of eternities—they are the pivots on which heaven and hell vibrate. As often as you can escape from the world, and get into some quiet nook, either in the country or in your closets, do think, not about what you have lost in trade yesterday, or what you shall gain to-morrow—but think, "as the summer suns are setting, and the autumn tints are coming," whether, when both are buried in the past, and the great blank of eternity is all you have got to look into with wistful face, you are saved or not saved.

There are, too, seasons of bereavement, when the thought suggested by the prophet should come home to us. When some bitter and irreparable loss breaks in upon us like an irresistible wave, carrying away upon its surge all that was fair, and beautiful, and hallowed; and when that surge almost sweeps away the very ground on which we ourselves were standing—in the terrible blank which such bereavement leaves behind it, the heart is made soft, tender, susceptible; and, in the agony of its desolation, it lifts itself above the world, and looks if there be any fixture above the tide-mark on which it can lay hold, and withstand the rush, and defy the force of other storms. At such a moment, all proud thoughts are levelled, all high imaginations are laid low. We see the tree withered down to the roots, and washed away, beneath whose beautiful shadow we sat so sweetly, and so securely. It is when such desolation overtakes us, that all that fascinates in this world parts with its beauty. Its palaces appear but clay, its favour appears but a name, its glory seems to be a flash upon the waters, and all its honour but shame. As when the floods have retired, the soil is made the more ready to

receive the seed that will grow up into fuller harvests—so the heart has become subdued and softened after such sweeping desolation; and the living seed that may be cast into it will bud, and blossom, and bring forth, in some thirty, in some sixty, and in some an hundred fold. At such a crisis it is the duty of the minister, it is the privilege of the Christian, to point the mourner to that beauteous bow, at first unseen, that spans the waste of waters—that bow which reminds us of the word of a covenant-making and a promise-keeping God, under whose glorious arch we may go forth from the bleak Ararat, where the flood has left us, and look forth, not like Noah, upon a world depopulated and dismantled, but upon the brightening prospects and the unfading splendours of the new Jerusalem itself. Seasons of bereavement are seasons for deep, holy, and permanent impression. Next to the season of youth, that of severe loss is the time when holy impressions may be most deeply made. Yet often have I noticed, in my short, and comparatively limited experience, as a minister of the gospel, that those who have suffered severe bereavement, after a season of deep and religious

feeling, relapse into worse than former insensibility: the world comes back; its pleasures again charm, its follies again attract; and even they who gave the rich promise of a new movement heavenward, and a new character and destiny, may be constrained to say, in the agony of their feelings, when death overtakes them—"That summer, whose sun shone with such promise upon us, is past; that harvest whose golden fruits we anticipated is gone; and alas, we are not saved!"

I know that I touch a chord that will vibrate responsively in every reader's heart, when I say that there are seasons even of merriment and gladness, which, to Christian minds, convey deep, holy, and abiding impressions. Perhaps, reader, around your happy fireside there was a happy Christmas gathering, and merry faces shone with unusual beauty in the light of that yule fire; and the music of children's glad voices, the sweetest music of all, was softer than Christmas chimes; but when you looked around at the bright scene, and heard the merry voices, did you not feel rising within you a sort of counter-current that made you sad, even when all around you was so joyful? You

thought—"This picture will one day be reversed; those heads, so full of bright thoughts, will one day toss upon the fevered pillow, and those little hearts, now beating with glad emotions, will one day beat 'funeral marches to the grave;' and this home, that now rings with the merry laugh, will one day echo the sighs and the lamentations of them that weep over the lost that will no more return." Thus, burial thoughts mingle with the brightest bridal thoughts, and you are sad, you know not why; thus we feel occasionally sorrowful, even when all around is happy. Such a season, when these reflections are kindled within you, is prepared for deep, holy, permanent impressions—impressions that will lead you to reverse the text I have quoted so often, when you come to lie down and die, and to say—"The summer indeed is past, and the harvest indeed is ended; but the truth that touched us then has been cherished and become developed into truth that sanctifies us now, and we are saved, the heirs of God, and the joint heirs of Jesus Christ."

There is another season when impressions may be made that are lasting and precious;

that of the expiring moments of each old year. That interval between the departing and the dawning year is a precious season; that moment which is, if I may so speak, the twilight of the years; the evening twilight of the one, that blends with the morning twilight of the other, holds folded in its embrace great results. The hour at the end of which one year lays down its load and its life, and out of which will soon emerge in resurrection-beauty—fraught with its issues, its facts, its sorrows, its joys, the next untried and unknown year; the place which is, as it were, the meeting of the waters of the past with the waters of the present; the spot at which the last year lays down its burden and its testimony, to witness against us or for us, and from which the next year starts in its career, "rejoicing like a strong man to run its race," is no unimportant thing in the biography of man. It seems a moment for settling other accounts than those of our ledgers—making other presents than those that are usually made. "My son, give me thy heart," is the demand that is addressed, then, to every man—the bill left at every man's door—a responsibility which remains at this moment upon every soul, the

ignoring of which is the refusal of our greatest joy, and the heartfelt response to which is the commencement of a new and blessed career. It is a voice of the night. "The night is far spent, the day is at hand." I admit this epoch is not real in one sense, because days, and years, and months, and weeks, are the mere nomenclature of man, the stepping-stones that part and mark, as it were, that strong current that runs ceaselessly along, in which there is no division or distinction in the nomenclature of heaven. Still it is, by a just conventional arrangement, a moment in the lapse of years when it becomes us to take a retrospect, and ask ourselves "What have the last fifty-two Sundays that I have spent done for me? What impressions have they left upon my heart? What new lessons have I learned? What new accessions have I made to my store of knowledge? What new hopes have been created within me? What new duties have they made more acceptable, more easy, more delightful? What new sacrifices have they prompted me to make? How much have I given to the cause of humanity—to the claims of Christ—to the progress of religion? What passions have I subdued?

What evil propensities have I extirpated by the aid of the Spirit of God? What evil connexions have I broken off? What bad company have I renounced? In short, has the past hardened, or has it subdued, and softened and sanctified me, so that I am not at its close what I was at its beginning, but have reason to thank God, that 'whereas I was once blind, now I see?'" Examine yourself; take an impartial retrospect; do not give every moment to the world, to the flesh, to Satan! but seize the fleet moment—grasp the rushing hours; determine you will not be the slaves of Satan, of Mammon, and of sin; but that you will seize moments in which you will think and you will know whether the summer that is ended, and the harvest that is closing, have ended the one and closed the other in your salvation, or the reverse. One wonders how men can continue in the world without thoughts like these. Though the recent epidemic that swept away its thousands has passed away, death is still mowing down his daily victims. We hear of those that were healthy at sunrise, cut down by sunset; and surely, if such facts are common, and sudden deaths are more common, I think, now

than ever they were, the universal experience should not, indeed, make us fear death, or be alarmed at the prospect of its approach; but it should induce us to ask ourselves in the sight of God, Have I that principle within me which will teach me to defy death? Am I resting on that blessed Saviour who will enable me to meet death as a friend, or to despise him as a foe—knowing that he lost his sting when I lost the burden of my transgressions, and that neither life nor death shall be able to separate me from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus my Lord? We are, in this world, very much like a man walking just once over a land strewn with gems and covered with fragments of virgin gold, which become fewer and less precious the farther he advances on his journey, till, when he arrives at the end of it, there is none left at all. How sad must be the reflection of that man if, when he has reached the limits of the country he has been traversing, he shall find that he has gathered fading flowers—that he has listened to the warbling birds on the trees, but has neglected to pick up one piece of gold or gather one gem, and that the country is now traversed by him for the last time, and that he

cannot return to make up in the future what he has culpably lost. Such is our position; we are travelling through a land where each step brings us nearer to that moment when its opportunities will be lost for ever, when, if we have mis-spent our time, we shall be constrained to say what we cannot conceal from ourselves —"The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved." To be saved is, as far as I can see, the rare thing; to be lost for ever —it is a very awful statement to make—seems, as far as we can judge, to be the frequent thing. And yet, what is it to be saved?—to be made unspeakably happy; really, truly, to live. What is it to be lost?—it is all summed up in one dread utterance—"A fearful looking-for of judgment and fiery indignation, where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched."

The gay, the frivolous, the thoughtless, whose life has been but preparation for the world, who have loved to look into each man's countenance, in order to catch the smile of approval, and have rarely spoken, save to hear the responsive echo of their own voices—those who have lived in pleasure and for pleasure—are not preparing for the harvest of the earth. In vain I

have warned you of the accelerated rush of years, the daily disappearance of precious hours unimproved. You have told me that rosy June would never end, that sunny July would not close—that the soft sun of August would not set—and lo? there is pale November and freezing December, the winter of death at your very doors. The last note is sung; the last act of the last drama is performed; the curtain falls; the summer is ended, the harvest is past; the last pulse is trembling in your heart; and what a terrible discovery as time ends—"I am not saved;" And there will be at that day, too, many an industrious man, many a prudent man, who will be able to say at his death, and what so far one likes to hear—"I have reared a family in comfort: I have laboured hard from early morning till late at evening; I have realised a property; I have made my sons to occupy a position greater and more dignified than that in which I was born; I have received the applause of all that knew me, as one honest, respectable, all that society could demand, and I am rich, and increased with goods; but I have neglected my soul and lost happiness; the summer is ended, the harvest is past;

and though I am many things which the world admires, I am not that which God demands—'I am not saved!'"

And there will be at that day some that can say. "We never deserted the house of God—we never were absent from the accustomed pew; nay, we never heard a sermon that touched our hearts, but we made purposes of amendment, and we liked the minister's preaching so that we never could be absent from our place. His was as the voice of one that played well upon an instrument; and ever as we had a sickness, our sick chamber became the place where we made new resolutions: and ever as we had a loss, that loss led us to think of the uncertainty of temporal things. But there we halted; and lo, the summer is ended—fragrant with the blossoms of a thousand resolutions; the harvest is past, but the blossoms were nipped before they were developed into fruit; and the discovery we now make, when that discovery is too late for reparation, is—'We are not saved!'"

Realise, if you can, that moment that lays low the lofty, and humbles all—a death-bed. Do not shrink from this duty; try to anticipate

it: it is absolutely certain, dear reader, that you and I must lie down and die. Are you in that state now in which you could wish to die? If you are not, why are you not? what is the reason of it? "What shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" Why do you reject the gospel? Why not live under its influence? Why does it not wield a supreme, absolute, absorbing sway in your heart? It would make you more happy: it would keep you in perfect peace. It would give you a conscious safety amid the shocks and convulsions of the world; it would make your brow calm, when the brows of all besides were overshadowed; it would make your heart beat joyfully when the hearts of all besides were fluttering with fear, because of the things that are coming on the earth. You have no idea—I have seen it, and I can testify it—how worthless that fortune of yours will look upon a death bed; you have not the least notion, and you will not believe me now, though one day you may feel it, how insignificant, paltry, worthless, pitiable, that money which you are now toiling, and drudging, and searching every part of the earth to gather, will then

and there appear! You have no conception now what vanity and vexation of spirit it will create on that day.

Then, reader, lay up treasures in the skies; start the Christian race; believe in Him who is the propitiation for our sins; resolve that if you have lived long without religion, you will live so no longer; and when you come to die, you will be able to look back from your sick-bed, and say, "I have lived, but not for myself; I have not made the world worse, but better; I have not been a mere blank or blot, but in some degree, a blessing; and I can now look forward to a crown of glory, to a life that shall never end—not because of what I have done, but because of Him who washed me in His blood, and made me a king and a priest to God and His Father for ever." Take the things of the world as refreshments by the way; regard eternal joy as the end of your journey, the hope of your hearts.

Thus I have looked at those seasons which in the night prove times of deep and solemn thought. Do not dismiss them from your mind; when they overtake it, ponder them; hold them fast, as did the patriarch, the angel;

pray that they may be consecrated to you, and that they may be long, deep, inextinguishable voices, sweet music by night—the prelude of a joyful day.

Even at this hour of the far-spent night, and amid all its varying scenes, vicissitudes, and sights, and sorrows, we who still live have abundant reason for gratitude.

True, there is no home or heart upon earth, on which clouds have not settled; no song has ever been sung beside the domestic hearth, or around a Christmas fire, in which a melancholy minor has not mingled. It is good for us that it should be so; we could not always live in the sunshine; we need cloud and shadow to soften and mitigate it. But whatever may have been the disasters that have overtaken us—whatever may be the character of the severe and startling incidents that may have happened beneath each roof,—yet if we compare our firesides with many a fireside in England—or the sad sufferings which the revelations recently made in one of the daily newspapers disclose, we shall neither be insensible to blessings, nor unthankful for them. Compare our home with the homes of the Continent of Europe, that still vibrate and

rock with the remaining shocks of the earthquake which began in 1848, and other shocks of which will soon follow, and are still clouded and shaded with dark and ominous prospects, and then let us ask ourselves if we have not abundant reason, as we review our domestic as well as our personal history, to say—"Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits!"

Nor is there a Christian congregation in the land, that has not much reason to be thankful. God has spared oftenest the green, and taken first the ripe. Death, whether to the young or to the aged Christian, is no calamity. It is but God's way of colonising heaven.

We are here, as it were, in the mother-land. Those mansions that Christ has gone to prepare, are the colonies he desires to people. He transplants us from this cold and wintry world, to yon balmy, and happy, and blessed world; and the children of God who are taken from us, are not lost—they are only gone before. It may be, that the distance between us and our dead in Christ, over whom we weep, is far less than the distance between us and our friends in Scotland, or America, or our acquaintance on the Continent of Europe. It may be that the dead who

are gone before us, are still spectators of our joys, witnesses of our trials, and that many a mother looks from her sphere of felicity and joy after that young man who forgets that mother's first lessons and forsakes that mother's beautiful and holy precedent, and breathes, if she does not utter, "O Absalom, my son, my son! O Absalom, my son, my son!" If, then, you love that mother—if you revere that mother's Christian example—let me ask you who are young, to be followers of her, and of them who through faith and patience have inherited the promises.

And I need not say, that as a nation we have much reason to be thankful. We have seen manifested lately much loyalty in the people, much generosity and liberality among the higher classes. Enquiries have been made into the condition of the poor, such as never have been instituted in any land. Efforts have been made by all parties—statesmen, politicians, religious men, worldly men—to mitigate and elevate the wretched and painful condition of the poor. All these are auguries and tokens of good, and they lead me often to hope, that when all the rest of the world shall be shattered by those storms

that are yet to descend upon us, God may be reserving this land to be the asylum of Europe, the sanctuary of the nations, and ambassadress of heaven, the benefactress of all mankind.

And of the Church Universal, the prospects are not less delightful. I believe there is an increase of real living religion in the midst of us. I believe that God is adding to His Church daily such as shall be saved. I believe the prospects of the Church of Christ, with all its drawbacks, and with all its failings, were never brighter or more pregnant with promise than they are at the present moment.

Let us then, amid all our troubles, lift our heads in hope, and our hearts in confidence; and when summers shall be ended, and future harvests shall be passed away, let us pray, let us determine, by God's grace, that we shall not be left to say, "The harvest is passed, the summer is ended, and we are not saved."

CHAPTER XV.

NEARING SUNRISE.

"Answer thine own Bride and Spirit!
Hasten, Lord, the general doom;
Promised glory to inherit,
Take thy pining exiles home.
All creation
Travails, groans, and bids thee come."

"For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come."—1 Cor. xi. 26.

The Lord's Supper was instituted in the night-season. It is one of the Voices of the Night. This paper presents an aspect of the communion rarely dwelt on: I view it as bearing on the future, as a pre-intimation of the dawn—a night-voice, with as much of what is to be, as of what has been, sounding in it. It sets forth the fact of the death of Jesus. We pronounce that to be fact which the sceptic has often tried to prove to be deception. It sets

forth the necessity of His death—that without shedding of blood, there is, and has been, and can be, and will be, no remission of sin. The atonement is the golden thread that runs through all Christianity: withdraw it, and the whole system must be exhausted of its vitality. If there be one truth more vividly written upon the brow of that gospel than another, it is this —that the least sin that has swept through the heart with the speed of the transit of the lightning beam, and the greatest sin that ever was perpetrated upon earth, must be forgiven, if forgiven at all, in one way, through one sacrifice, and that the precious blood of the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world. It is not the fact, that great sins need an atonement, and little sins, as they are called, may be excused without it; but it is the truth that sounds in every promise, that is inscribed on every page, that is demonstrable from the whole structure of Christianity, that there is no sin so minute as to be beneath the range, or the reach, or the necessity of its efficacy, and that there is no sin so heinous, and so great, as to be beyond its power to forgive and to take away. I have often viewed the communion-table in its

retrospective character: I wish to study it in its prospective character. The Apostle says, "As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death:" that is retrospective; but he adds, "till he come," which indicates a prospective bearing.

Christ fills the whole sphere of a Christian's being; he is in all the hopes, the faith, the joys of a Christian's life—the alpha and the omega, the first and the last. This neither can be nor has been said of any other being, the head or founder of any other system that ever was proclaimed in the language of man. There is something peculiar in the gospel in this respect, that it brings men, not into contact with a dogma, but into union and communion with a living Being—that being the Son of God, the Saviour of sinners. If I look backward, in the way in which we have already looked, I hear the name of Christ in every promise; I see reflected the glory and the likeness of Christ from every type. Every harp, from Miriam's to Malachi's, resounds with His name; every type, from the earliest to the last, is the mirror of His beauty; all the facts of history, all the phenomena of the past, are but pre-significant

signs and foreshadows of His advent, till all light becomes the dawn of His rising, and all sounds but the foot-fall of the approach of Him who came to suffer, and will come to reign. During the eighteen hundred years which have elapsed since that fact—that great central fact in the annals of eternity and time—occurred, viz., the death of Christ, He has been all, and in all, in the sufferings of His people, and in their consolations too. In the rise and ruin of empires, in the flourishing and decadence of churches, Christ's presence, Christ's book, Christ's principles, Christ's precepts, have been predominant. Expunge Christianity from the world, and there will be a blank behind too terrible for man to gaze on.

That one fact, that Jesus died upon the cross, has more altered the aspect, and changed the history, and directed the current of human events, than all the triumphs of Alexander, and Cæsar, and Napoleon, added together. Can it be a human event that has thus put forth a creative power? Can this be an ordinary fact that has transformed, ever as it touched, the aspect and history of mankind? Erase, then, that name from the earth, and its brightest

spots would be disenchanted. Silence that sound which is the key-note of our songs, and all the harmonies of the world would be thrown into confusion. Take the Bible from us, and we should only learn, by the terrible gap that is left behind, what a mighty blessing, what a glorious possession, has been, in judgment or in chastisement, temporarily or for ever, removed from our hands. In that respect, then, to which I have alluded, the cross has been the chief thing, the sublime thing: so much so that Christians, as they have looked at it, have said what the Apostle said, and said from his heart—"God forbid that we should glory, save in the cross of Christ!"

The communion-table is but a central upon which the grand panorama of Calvary sweeps before us—a voice of the night ever swelling upwards;—and the songs of the sanctuary are but the unspent, feeble echoes of those blessed words which closed that dread tragedy to Jesus, and opened these bright prospects to us: "It is finished." Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift? What shall we render to the Lord for all His benefits to us? We will take into our hands the cup of salvation, and we will

call upon the name of the Lord. When, therefore, we surround a communion-table, we do so to express our sense of infinite obligation, and to give embodiment to emotions of gratitude and devotedness. Upon the public platform, and in the public eye, we declare and assert what we have done in the closet, with the doors shut—that, be ashamed who may of Christ and Him crucified, we are not ashamed of the Gospel of Jesus. It is the basis of our hope; it is the fountain of our joy; it is the ground of our acceptance before God the Father in heaven. Well is its first night called "a night ever to be remembered;" well has it been named by one, "the noontide of love;" and deeply may it be felt by us all to be a fact worthy of the gratitude of the thankful—the songs of them that loved Him—the celebration of all, in every age, and under all circumstances, "till He come" again. When a minister invites to that table, it is not to join the communion that he prefers; it is not for any to associate themselves in membership with any body, party, or section upon earth; it is still an oäsis in the wilderness of sectarianism, to which people come as the Apostles came, when sects and systems were

not yet developed, "to do this in remembrance of Jesus," and to show forth His death "till He come." If, in some excess of bigotry, exclusiveness, and fanaticism, we should try to appropriate that table, as the monopoly of a party, and not the common table of all Christians, because spread by their common Lord—that Lazarus who was raised from the dead at Bethany, and who sat there before us—that son of the widow of Nain—that restored maniac of Gadara, "clothed, and in his right mind"—the Apostles of the first century, and the martyrs of the second—Augustine, Jerome, Vigillantius, Agobard, Wickliffe, Luther, Knox, Cranmer, Latimer—if they could become animate and vocal, would rise from the graves and rebuke us for trying to make that particular, which is catholic—that sectarian, which is for all who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity and truth.

But the light in which I have looked at this subject has been, as I have said, its retrospective bearing; but it has, though it has not been looked at in this light, as I think it ought to have been, a prospective bearing. The Apostle says, we are to show forth His death "till He

come." I do not wish to look at these words, or even to moot the discussion of them, in a controversial sense. But, plainly, "till He come," must refer to the Saviour's second advent, not to any previous advent that may, by possibility, be called so; because if He has come, then the Sacrament has ceased. It is only to last "till He come;" if He has come, and if the mode in which He has come can be pronounced to be the fulfilment of His words, then the Lord's Supper has passed away, and it ought not to be celebrated. But if the "till I come" be that advent which is often spoken of in the Scriptures, then there can be no doubt that we do his will when we celebrate this Supper; and that we do so in the attitude of believers when we do it, looking to that era which is here denoted as His advent. There is something beautiful in this—that a communion-table connects the cross of Jesus and the crown of glory—that the crucified and the glorified are both associated with this blessed festival: so that, like the rainbow that John alludes to in the Apocalypse, one end of it rests upon the cross; it then vaults into the sky, sweeps past the throne of intercession on which Jesus sits,

descends again to the earth, and rests upon the crown; thus forming, as it were, the pathway by which the Saviour rose, and along which He will travel again—describing the arc of mercy and of love that Jesus commenced on Calvary, and will finish and complete when the kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of our God and of His Christ, and He reigns for ever and ever.

It is thus, too, and looking at it in this light, that the words of the Apostle are seen to be strikingly fulfilled: "Now abideth faith, hope, and charity"—or love. Faith looks backward to the cross, and derives its nutriment there; love looks upward to Christ upon his throne, "whom having not seen it loves; in whom, though now it sees Him not, yet believing, it rejoices;" and hope looks forward to that day when He shall appear with many crowns, King of kings, and Lord of lords. Thus the faith, hope, and love of the Apostle, are the parasite graces that cling to the one Christ, draw their nutriment from the one sacrifice, and are inseparable from Him in whom they live, and move and have their being. Faith thinks of the High Priest's sacrifice without; love thinks

of the High Priest's intercession in the holy place where He now is; and hope waits expecting till He come forth, and bless the people that are looking for Him. It is thus that as a Christian I cannot be happy without a full Christ. I cannot so rivet my eye upon the cross that I shall be blind to His crown; I cannot be so fascinated by the future crown that I shall forget that he was crucified for me; I may not lose His crown in his cross, nor His cross in His crown; but rest upon the one for forgiveness of my sins, and anticipate the other for the satisfaction of all the yearnings of my heart, and for entrance into that perfect joy, felicity, and bliss, that are promised to the people of God. Faith looks to his cross, and is invigorated there; love lifts its heart to His throne, and is rekindled there; hope, with unwearied wing, soars onward to the future, and is refreshed, and strengthened, and exhilarated there. Christ suffering, Christ interceding, Christ glorified, is the perfect Saviour; faith, hope, and love, constitute the perfect graces of the perfect Christian. Christ's first advent finished the types of the Jewish economy; Christ's second advent will finish the rites of

the Christian economy. When he came the Passover passed away; and when He comes again the Lord's Supper itself will pass away. But until He come, the Lord's Supper is meant to be the place where we not only believe, but hope; not only feed on Him, but look for Him a second time without sin unto salvation.

The attitude of the church of Christ is that of constant looking forward. The whole Bible is full of that great time. Let me give some instances. "One like the Son of Man came in clouds of heaven; and there was given unto him dominion and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and tribes should serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that shall not be destroyed." Again, in Jude:—"The Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, to execute judgment upon all." Jesus tells us so himself. "When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him; then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory." He tells us again: "I will not leave you comfortless; I will come again, and receive you to myself." Now these promises are just as true as the fact that Christ died." This was preached

by the Apostles :—" He shall send Jesus which before was preached unto you, whom the heavens must receive till the times of the restitution of all things; of which times God hath spoken by the mouth of his holy prophets." Again, the Apostle says to Timothy :—" That thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ: which in his times he shall show who is the blessed and only potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords." The angels preached the same fact :—" Two men stood by in white apparel, which said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing into heaven? This same Jesus which was taken from you into heaven shall come in like manner as ye have seen him go." How did Jesus go? He rose, and a cloud received him out of sight. Well, says the angel, in the same manner Christ shall come again to this very earth. Again it is pronounced repeatedly in other passages: " They shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory." " Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand, with power, and coming in the clouds of heaven." " The Son of man shall

come in the glory of his Father with his angels, and then shall he reward every man according to his works." "When the Son of man shall come in his glory." "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God." "The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and the trump of God." "The Son of man shall come in his glory, and all his holy angels with him." That ye may establish your hearts unblemished in holiness before God, even the Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." Again:—"Lest coming suddenly he find thee sleeping." "Therefore be ready, for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh." No man can say that the heavens will not rend and the trumpet sound to-morrow. No man knows the day nor the hour; and if there be any meaning in the New Testament, it is that the Christian is to stand ever expecting the hour when "the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat:" "for the day of the Lord cometh as a thief in the night." And when he comes what are

we to expect then? The dead in Christ shall rise first. "The Lord himself shall descend with a shout, and the dead in Christ shall rise first, and we which are alive shall be caught up to meet them in the clouds." And the end for which he comes is to complete our salvation. "To them that look for him shall he appear a second time without sin unto salvation." Let us ask that question,—"Are we looking for him? Is this our state? Is it to them that look for him that he will appear the second time without sin unto salvation?" And, says Peter:—"Kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time." Again:—"When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe." "The Lord Jesus shall come and judge the quick and the dead at his appearing." "The Lord of hosts shall reign in Mount Zion and Jerusalem, before his ancients gloriously." This period is called in other portions of Scripture, "times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord;" "the times of the restitution of all things;" "the last time;" "the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour

Jesus Christ;" "the day of our Lord Jesus Christ."

All these passages, when taken together, constitute the full exposition of the words, "till I come;" and all of them show that the attitude of a true Christian, not only at the communion-table, where it is primarily so, but in all circumstances, is that of looking for the second personal appearing of Him who "shall change our vile body, and transform it into the likeness of his own glorious body."

Now, the great scope of the Romish apostasy, as the perfect contrast of the Christian Church, is to blind the eyes of her people to this great apocalypse, and to destroy and weaken the thirst of their hearts for this glorious appearing. She finds Christians looking and wishing for the advent of Jesus; and what does she do? She gives them an image or a likeness of Him in order to satisfy their thirst. They ask for the living bread—she gives them a dead stone. And lest in that blessed ordinance which we regularly celebrate, the thought should still rush into their hearts that we are to do it "till Christ come," and the earnest cry should spring from those hearts, "Come, Lord Jesus!" she

tells them that this desire is pacified in the sacrament, and that they are not to look beyond it for Christ, for that the bread they eat is turned into His soul and body, His divinity and humanity; that He is personally present, and that they need not, therefore, look for Him. If there be one great perversion of the Gospel more marked than another in that system, it is its attempt to destroy in the yearning heart of God's people that longing, thirsting desire, "Come, Lord Jesus, take the kingdom and reign for ever." But this ordinance, preserved and celebrated in its purity, shows us that while we do so, we are not only to have a retrospective reference to his cross, but an onward and an upward aspiration after that blessed epoch when he shall take the crown, and reign for ever and ever: so much so, that this expectation is the attitude of every communicant; it is the polarity of a Christian's heart. He lives in the future as much as he lives in the past: for if the past gives him the ground of all his hopes, it is the future that gives him the gratification of those hopes. We are thus to look for the advent of Christ, because in this ordinance we are commanded to do so;

we are to look for his advent, because the bride longs for the Bridegroom—the children look for the parent—the disciples pray for their Lord. All of us recollect his own blessed promise,—"I will not leave you comfortless; I will come again, and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also."

The command given by the Apostle proves that we are to show forth the Lord's death, not till our death overtakes us, not till the millennium comes, but until Christ comes. Our hope is not the dawn, but the sun; not a state on earth, but the presence of the Lord. Let us then notice the inducements we have thus to show forth Christ's death, thus to anticipate his advent.

Why, in celebrating this sacrament, should we desire Christ's advent? When he comes, there will be no more ordinances, memorials, or sacraments. When the substance comes, the shadow shall be swept away: when the sun rises, the stars that intimated his advent will all disappear; the river is lost in the sea, the type in the antitype, the symbol in the substance; and we shall see a present Christ, not commemorate or anticipate an absent Christ.

When he comes, we shall no more see through a glass darkly. Truths that are full of impenetrable mystery now, shall then be luminous; events that are perplexing to us shall then be plain; difficulties that now divide Christians shall then be done away; obscurities that now lie upon the face of God's Word shall then disappear like mists before the rise of the morning sun. There will then be a glorious epiphany—a sublime apocalypse—we shall read God's Word no more in a reflected, and therefore dim, light, but in the noon-day splendour of Him who shall be in the midst of His people, and shine before his ancients gloriously. We shall "see the King in his beauty, and the land that is far off." We shall no more say, every man to his brother, "Know the Lord: for all shall know him, from the least to the greatest."

We cannot but anticipate this advent, because when He comes, the sufferings and sorrows of humanity shall all cease. "Here we groan within ourselves," says the Apostle; and he says in another place: "Not only they, but ourselves, which have the first-fruits of the Spirit, groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption,

to wit, the redemption of the body." No one can doubt that in this life the body has an immense influence on the soul; they touch each other at so many points of contact, that what disturbs the one, interferes with the comfort of the other. Were it not for the clog of a body that is allied to the dust, how much higher would our souls soar! how much sweeter would our experience be! But when Christ shall come, pains shall cease; aches, and fevers, and illness shall be unknown; the body, raised from the dust, shall be the meet companion of the redeemed and glorified soul; and we shall then not only see him as he is, but we shall love him as we ought.

When he comes, the groans of nature shall all cease; the curse pronounced upon the earth shall be reversed; the grand benediction of our High Priest shall be pronounced; the thistles and thorns that are the symbols of the curse shall then disappear; "the solitary place shall rejoice, and the desert shall blossom as the rose." The dissolving heavens and the disorganised earth shall give place to a new heaven and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness; and He that sits upon the throne shall

make all things new. Therefore we anticipate and pray for his advent.

We long for this advent, because when he comes, the dead who have fallen asleep in Christ shall then rise from their graves and be re-united with those from whom they have been severed, years, centuries, millennia; and so shall they be for ever with the Lord. These we loved upon earth, who have loved us, whose dim images are all that the tablets of memory retain, and to meet with whom in the realms of a purer and a happier state is one of our cheering, bright, and best hopes, shall then rejoin us; for the Lord shall descend, "and the dead in Christ shall rise first." He will speak, "Arise, and come!" and then, from the sands of the desert, from the depths of the sea, the dead shall answer, "We come, we come!" From marble monuments, that have been raised by wealth to commemorate its excellence, and from the green sod that covers the poor beggar that fell asleep in Jesus, the dead will hear His voice, and answer, "We come, we come!" From altar pavements, and from silent urns, from hills and valleys, and from the dust that men tread upon, the dead shall start forth at the sound of that

trumpet, and answer, "We come, we come!" And the dead dust of every risen one, kindled by a beam from that glorious sun, shall instantly be transformed into the likeness of Jesus: and, in the splendours and glories of an unsetting sun, be for ever happy, because for ever holy, with the Lord. Is not such an epoch worth praying for? Is not such a bright advent worth anticipating? And is not the communion-table a welcome scene, that enables us to feel that we are doing this, though with imperfect love, and in an imperfect dispensation, till He come who shall sweep it away, and restore the substance of which it is but the dim symbol?

When he comes, the living saints shall meet the Lord in the air. The Apostle tells us that "the dead in Christ shall rise first;" and then "we which are alive shall be caught up to meet the Lord in the air." No language can be plainer. This is not a controversial point, which admits of dispute, but a plain text. Let us try to realise it. Some silent eve, when the stillness of night broods over this great, this over-crowded capital—when the bacchanalian has retired to rest without thought, without

God, without prayer, without a sense of gratitude or an appeal for safety—when the Christian has committed himself to the Shepherd of Israel that slumbereth not, nor sleepeth, one dread and piercing sound shall rend the heaven and the earth, louder ten thousand times than the loud thunder; and at that instant every sealed grave shall open, and "one shall be taken, and the other left;" and every door, however barred and bolted, shall be flung open, and two shall be together, and one shall feel a mysterious virtue penetrating every limb and nerve and fibre, and shall rise under some mighty and mysterious impulse, irresistible and full of glory and of happiness, and meet the Lord in the air; whilst the other that he loved shall be left behind.

Anticipating that era, knowing not when the time may come, we have no business saying this or that must first take place. Our simple attitude is that which this blessed ordinance points out, giving neither date nor figure, but simply looking back from this day, and this place, and seeing nothing during the lapse of 1820 years but Christ upon the cross bearing our sins, and saying, "It is finished;" and then

looking forward, it may be through days, it may be through years, it may be through a half century—it can scarcely be longer—and seeing nothing between us now and that bright and glorious epiphany—Christ and him crowned. So a Christian stands, so he believes, so he hopes, so he shows forth the Lord's death till he come.

We anticipate this blessed epoch on another ground. As soon as Christ shall come, and only when he comes, death itself shall be destroyed. We are now very prone to say, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" when a Christian dies. But such a voice uttered at present is anticipatory. It is a voice of the day, not of the night. We are told by the Apostle that death is not finally destroyed till the Lord himself shall come: for what does he say? (1 Cor. xv. 22.)—"As in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the first-fruits; afterwards they that are Christ's at his coming. Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority. For he must reign

till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death." Then that enemy is not yet destroyed. You need no scripture to convince you of this. What home has not been darkened by its shadow? What heart has not been grieved and cut by the ravages he has left behind him? But what heart does not rejoice that this enemy who has darkened so many homes, and broken so many hearts, and left so many gaps in happy brotherhoods and sisterhoods, is the enemy that shall be destroyed when Christ comes? Therefore, when we take into our hands the bread and wine, we do show forth Christ's death, and we anticipate as the fruit of that death the time when death itself shall be destroyed. "Then only," says the Apostle, "when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality"—that is, when all Christ's people are raised—"then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, 'Death is swallowed up in victory.' 'O death where is thy sting?'—[the song of the resurrection]—'O grave where is thy victory?' The sting of death is sin; the strength of sin is the law; but thanks be to God which giveth us

the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." "And therefore," he says, as if he prescribed for your feelings at that table, "my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, immoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."

Lastly, we are to look foward to this blessed epoch, because then, in soul, body, and spirit, we shall be made perfectly happy. There will then be a pure Church. The tares shall be gathered and cast into the fire; the bad fishes shall be removed; the sons of God, now hid, shall be manifest; and the whole ransomed Church of the Lord shall sit down at the marriage-feast of the Lamb, with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and all that have fallen asleep in Christ. Is not this, then, worth anticipating? Do we not err sometimes when we so dwell upon the triumphs of the past that we do not anticipate the glories of the future? Do we not—without controversially looking at the varied interpretations of excellent men—fail in reaping the full happiness of the Gospel when we fail to look forward to the second advent of the Saviour, and to anticipate it as the era of

hopes and joys fulfilled, of gaps and chasms removed, of death and the grave destroyed, the dawn of perfect happiness, perfect joy, and unwearied service of the Lord our God? If this be so, then, just in proportion as we anticipate that glorious advent, will our hearts rise and rest where our Saviour Christ is. We are told that "wherever the treasure is, there will the heart be also." If we are looking into heaven for Christ to come from it, then our hearts will be joyful in heaven; our treasure being there, our hearts shall be there also. Abraham leaped for joy when he looked for Christ's advent to suffer; how much more should we leap for joy when we anticipate Christ's advent to reign for ever and ever. Let this hope, then, be enthroned in our hearts; let it displace all meaner preferences; let it extinguish all lesser lights; let us look for that blessed day when Christ shall come, and the kingdoms of the world shall be the kingdoms of our God and of His Christ.

If this be true, how joyfully should we join in the sacred festival of the Eucharist? With what readiness should we surround that table on which rest rays from the past and rays from

the future—on which is the shadow of the cross —and on which there is reflected also the glory of the crown! How gladly should we compass that holy table, whose memory looks through the vista of a thousand years, and sees the Saviour bearing our sins that we might inherit His righteousness; and hears the echo of His triumphant accents—"It is finished;" and by which our hope looks along the corridors of coming years, and sees with ecstasy the Son of man coming in glory, and hears already the first notes of that everlasting jubilee, "Hallelujah, for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth!"

And if we are to anticipate this blessed epoch, let us bear with patience and confiding magnanimity, the trials, and sorrows, and afflictions of this present life. Let us bear in mind that earth is not the home, nor the grave the end, of the immortal soul. Let us feel that all we suffer upon earth is but the needed and predestinated discipline requisite to fit us for a better world. Let us bear in mind that the sorest tribulation is but a vestibule to glory, that there is a needs-be in the hardest and heaviest trial, and that the worst afflictions are the anointed messengers who are sent from the

Lord to bow the proud heart, to break the hard spirit, to wean our affections from the world, where they are naturally disposed to cluster, and to fix them upon that bright and blessed rest that remaineth for the people of God. Let us nestle beneath the outstretched wings of our Father; let us anchor beneath the shadow of the Rock of ages; and anticipate in the future the fulfilment of that hope which ushers in the brightness of everlasting day, and unites the bride to the Bridegroom, the children to their Father, the saved to their Lord, their all and in all. Let us henceforth celebrate the Supper by looking upon it as a pledge that Jesus will come, just as truly as a memorial that Jesus has come. I hear in its accents the voice of the sufferer, but I hear also the accents of the conqueror. I see sweep along that table the shadow of Calvary; I see reflected upon that table, too, the glories and the splendours of the millennial morn; I see in it God's great token that Jesus has suffered, and that therefore we are saved; but I see in it also God's great pledge that Jesus will come again, and that therefore we shall be with him. It is thus that the past is luminous with mercy, that the future

unbosoms new blessings, and that the whole horizon, to a Christian's heart, tells of the goodness, the glory, and the promises of his God.

Let me learn, in the next place, from this, how real is the unity of the Church of Christ. By the Church I do not mean a mere ecclesiastical convention of professors, who observe certain rites and celebrate certain orderly and, it may be, beautiful forms; but the whole company of God's believing, justified, and sanctified people: and for that church, strictly so called, the Church that was first, and shall be last, and shall reign for ever and ever, the true principle and bond of unity is, looking at one Christ in the past—looking forward to one Christ in the future; seeing the whole sphere of time filled with the rays of that Sun of Righteousness who is about to rise and shine upon us in noon-day splendour. Let us not be ashamed to confess him ere he comes in his glory. Them that confess him before men will he confess before the Father in heaven. Let us henceforth come to this table, not because it is a custom, or a decent solemnity, or a passport to credit, acceptance, and repute among mankind; but simply,

as our Saviour has taught us by the mouth of his Apostle, to commemorate the greatest fact the annals of the universe record—that Christ has suffered that we might be forgiven—and to anticipate with joy the brightest prospect that the universe will ever see, when Christ shall come, to them that look for him a second time, without sin unto salvation. Let us lift our eyes to the hills, and look longingly for the Sun of Righteousness. His first rays already sprinkle the distant mountain-tops,—the stars grow dimmer,—the night is far spent:—the children of the resurrection, weary, and yet waiting, cry with one voice—"Come, Lord Jesus!" The answer is recorded—"Unto you that fear my Name shall the Sun of Righteousness arise with healing on his wings." Even so, come, Lord Jesus!

CHAPTER XVI.

THE VOICE CRYING IN THE DESERT

"Follow with reverent steps the great example
Of Him whose holy work was doing good;
So shall the wide earth seem our Father's temple,
Each loving life a psalm of gratitude.

"Then shall all shackles fall—the stormy clangour
Of wild war music o'er the earth shall cease;
Love shall tread out the baleful fire of anger,
And in its ashes plant the tree of peace."

"Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of Hosts."—MALACHI iii. 1.

THERE are two personages named in one passage from Malachi, who are called messengers, perfectly distinct from one another. "Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me:" that is one person. And then, "the Lord,"—Jehovah,—

"whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant." This last is a distinct and a separate person. On the former only I would now offer a few remarks. The first person mentioned in the passage is plainly John the Baptist. This conclusion we arrive at, not from conjecture, but from the positive assertion of those who were inspired by the Holy Spirit of God. We are told in the Gospel according to St. Mark, "As it is written in the prophets, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee. The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. John did baptise in the wilderness,"—and there is thus the application of the prediction of Malachi to John the Baptist. There is added to that prediction another given by Isaiah the prophet, in which he speaks of "a voice crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord." We have the very same testimony also in Matthew xi. 10, and in Luke vii. 27. All of these distinctly and unmistakeably assert that the first messenger here spoken of is John the Baptist, and that Malachi's prediction was realised or made ac-

tual in him. Here, then, is a minute prediction of a very special person, uttered three hundred years before that person appeared, and eventually found to be minutely fulfilled in him, and in no other who steps upon the stage at any previous or subsequent time. The strongest evidence, if such were needed, of the inspiration of the ancient prophets, is found in the exact and minute fulfilment of these prophecies in the personages that appear in the New Testament Scriptures, sometimes seven hundred years, sometimes a thousand years after the prophecy had been uttered.

How precious is this fact, that after God had described the utter profligacy of the whole Jewish church, he should reply to that profligacy by the prediction of a day of grand and beneficent interposition, issuing in salvation to them and glory to himself! It is a most remarkable trait, running through the whole ancient Scriptures, that after God has described how dreadful were the sins of his people, instead of threatening penalty, as man does, he promises, as God only does, glorious deliverance. One cannot but be struck, on reading these, with the thought, that judgment is God's

strange work, that mercy is his beloved attribute. When the nation's sins demand that the thunderbolt shall descend and destroy, instead of that minister of judgment there is seen gilding the black cloud the beauteous rainbow, the covenant memorial of mercy and truth that have met together, and righteousness and peace that have kissed each other. In Malachi, second chapter, is a picture of the degeneracy of the church; in the third is a prophecy of the interposition of a Saviour. The degeneracy I have referred to, as so largely and so minutely delineated by Malachi, was that of a church that had lineal succession in its priests, that was founded amid miracles, that was under what is called a theocracy, the immediate government of God himself. A church so founded, so tended, so peculiarly and prosperously situated, degenerated into complete apostasy, and crucified the Lord of Glory, and ultimately had its candlestick wholly removed from its place. Now, if there be such a thing as Apostolic succession,—which, I assert, in scripture is not known, and in history is a nonentity: for nothing is plainer to any reader of ancient ecclesiastical history than this, that to assert that on a personal

lineal succession in the ministry of the Gospel from the days of an existing bishop, pope, prelate, or presbyter, up to the days of the Apostles, is contingent the momentous question of church or no church, salvation or no salvation, sacraments or no sacraments, Christianity or no Christianity, is simply to play into the hands of the pope of Rome, or more probably into the hands of the successors of Voltaire, Diderot, Hume, or Paine; for the thing is historically not fact, and scripturally not required,—suppose there be such a succession, I yet argue from the past, it is no guarantee against the introduction of the most deadly error, or the occurrence of the most entire Apostasy. For here is a church —the church of the Jews—that had an historical succession unquestioned and unquestionable: a church that had a reality, of which the modern pretension is but the sham and the shadow; founded amid miracles, perpetuated amid miracles,—not like those that Dr. Newman sets his name to, and professes his admiration of, but real miracles,—whose magnificence and grandeur, and end and use, were worthy of the interposition of a God. Notwithstanding these privileges, this church plunged into an

apostasy from the truth, and a degeneracy from morality, so entire, that it rejected the Lord of Glory, and preferred Barabbas, a thief and a murderer, in his place. To those, therefore, who believe that they have this Apostolic succession, I address not an uncharitable, but a seasonable remark, "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall; for if God spared not them, much less will he spare you."

But I pass on to the immediate context of the passage I have read. It seems to me to prove, to take the lowest possible view, the pre-existence of the Lord Jesus Christ. "Behold, I will send my messenger." The Evangelists all say that these words were uttered by Jesus Christ, and the text shows they could have been uttered by none else. "And he shall prepare the way before me." What was John the Baptist's mission? It was to prepare the way before the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore Christ existed in the days of Malachi. "And the LORD,"—now, the word "LORD" is in capital letters, in order to show that it represents what the Jew considered the incommunicable name —Jehovah, a name peculiar to Deity. "The

Lord shall suddenly come,"—that is, Christ's advent,—"to his temple,"—which was the figure of his body, "even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith" God the Father, "the Lord of Hosts." Here, then, we have not only the pre-existence, but the Deity of Jesus. This doctrine be it remembered, is not a mere theological dogma, which one may dispense with and yet be a Christian; it is, in my humble judgment, the very core, and substance, and pith, and life, of all real religion. Take away the Deity of Jesus, and his sacrifice is no atonement; and his death—it is a very strong statement, but I make it advisedly—was the death of a suicide; for he submitted willingly, and exposed himself willingly, to that death which he endured. But we know in whom we have believed; we can say to him what we can say to no created being whatever, "Thou art the Son of God, Thou far the King of Glory, O Christ."

We next learn from this passage, that the temple is the property of Jesus Christ, "Jehovah, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple." In what respect was the ancient

temple of Jerusalem the temple of Christ? I answer, first, he himself said, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." This he spake of his body. The temple, therefore, was the type or the symbol of his body. So we find that everything in the temple related directly or indirectly to the Lord Jesus Christ. The daily lamb that was slain upon the altar, was the type of the Lamb of God. Remembering this, we see how expressive were the words of John the Baptist, "Behold the Lamb of God:" these words were uttered in the morning, and no doubt at that moment when the morning lamb was being borne to the temple in order to be offered as the morning sacrifice; John turned the people's eyes from the type that was finished to the antitype, the Lord Jesus Christ, who had arrived, and said, "Behold the Lamb of God." So, in the same manner, the mercy-seat was the symbol of the great propitiation. The glory that shone between the cherubim was the glory of Jesus Christ:—"We beheld his glory," said the Evangelist, "the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." And the high priest was a shadow of Christ, the

true High Priest. I might go over the whole furniture of the temple, or rather, read the Epistle to the Hebrews, and there we should learn that the temple was justly his, because every court in it rung with his praise—every prefiguration in it was the shadow of his presence—every sound in it was the footfall of the approaching Great Deliverer. What was thus said of the ancient temple ought to be and is true of every section of the true church of Christ. The church universal is Christ's church; it is not Cranmer's church, nor Knox's church, nor Wesley's church, but Christ's church. It is the awful blemish upon us all, that the names of men predominate in our theology more than the name of Christ; and that we are distinguished upon earth, not by that only and magnificent name, "Christian," but by some surname that is of the earth, and to the earth must again return, that "Christ" and "Christian" may be all and in all. Surely, ecclesiastics do not act with the same humility with which men of taste act in relation to the fine arts. Once an ancient statuary put his own name too prominently on one of the statues he had chiselled; and for that reason, notwith-

standing its artistic excellence, it was rejected by the accomplished Greeks. When an artist executes a work, his own name should be in some obscure nook of it. When a statuary chisels out of the marble some beautiful bust, his own name should be in some hidden part of it, to be sought out—not prominent. When we select a church, or constitute a church, our own names, even the names of saints and Apostles, should be darkened and subordinated, in order that the name of Christ may be all and in all. Although it is a custom in England, and Scotland too, to call churches by the names of saints, —St. Andrew's, St. John's, St. James's, St. Stephen's,—yet, it is not a very beautiful practice. The name "Christ," "Christian," should alone be prominent, yea, all and in all. He redeemed the Church by his blood, he selected it, he gave it his Spirit to sanctify it; it is his Word that is read in it, not man's; it is his Gospel that is preached in it; it is his praise that is sung in it; it is in his name that we pray; and therefore every pulpit should echo with his name, and every pew should be filled by those who thirst for his truth. Prayer should be offered up through his mediation;

the whole church visible should be radiant with the glory of Christ; and it should be there what the martyr said when he was tied to the stake,—in the church, as in the heart,—"None but Christ, none but Christ." Just in proportion as we rise in spirituality, in purity, in scriptural character, will this be the case.

Christ is here said, not only to have the temple for his, but to be "the messenger of the covenant." The Baptist is called "my messenger;" if Jesus be "the messenger of the covenant," in what sense can the Baptist be called Christ's messenger? It was the custom with ancient kings to send messengers before them, to prepare their way, and signal their approach. And the very appointment of a messenger to precede Jesus, even in his humiliation, was a forelight and evidence of his royal dignity, as the King of his church. But what John the Baptist did for Jesus personally, ministers of the Gospel are still to do for him, now that he is at the right hand of God, in the glory of God the Father. A minister of the Gospel is beautifully described by Malachi, as a messenger. Who is the messenger one would rather employ? Surely, the man who delivers one's message the

most fully. And who is the best messenger or minister of Christ? Not he who adds to his message something to commend it, or who deducts from the message something that he thinks tends to make it unpopular; but he who renders the message with which he has been intrusted in its greatest truthfulness and purity. And what is the dignity of a minister of the Gospel? That he is sent out by Christ as a messenger. What is the dignity of a soldier? Not that he wears a red coat, but that he carries the queen's commission. What is the dignity of a minister of the Gospel? That he carries the commission of the Lord Jesus Christ. God has placed the people in that position that they can judge, if they be Christians, whether he delivers his message or not. If the Bible were the monopoly of the clergy, and in no respect the possession of the people, then they might deliver what sentiments they liked, and the hearer could not tell whether it were God's message or not. But the economy of the Gospel is, that, while the minister shall proclaim the message, the people shall have the original Book, and they may reject his message, if it has not its counterpart there; while they

are bound to receive his message, if it be the echo of what is there. Therefore, the most effective episcopacy or presbytery that a preacher can have, is the Bible in every pew. It has been noticed in Scotland as an interesting fact, that the preacher cannot refer to a passage in scripture, without the audience turning over the leaves of their Bibles to see if it is so: this is a truly Protestant habit; and so long as we refer to its page, trying all by its testimony, taking no man's *ipse dixit*, but bringing even an angel from heaven, if he were to appear in the pulpit, to that blessed Book, so long none will be led fatally or far to err.

We are told, "Behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of hosts." There can be little mistake about the meaning of this, and there can be less now about its fulfilment. It is, however, a very remarkable fact, that God's prophecies respecting the Advent of his Son seem to have spread athwart the whole habitable globe, and in the shape of traditional echoes to have been dispersed over all the world. The great promise of a Messiah, which was the grand truth that the Jew clung to in his most desperate fortunes, found itself translated into heathen

tongues, and accepted even by heathen men. For instance, the poet Virgil dedicates a poem to Pollio, his patron, in which he says, that one would soon be born into the world, who, it was expected, would bring in the golden age. The Sibyl leaves were plainly borrowed from the prophet Isaiah. Suetonius, an ancient historian, states, too, what is a remarkable proof of the spread of this idea, that a certain and settled persuasion prevailed in the East, that the cities of Judea, would bring forth, about this time, a person who should obtain universal empire. And Tacitus, the eloquent historian, but the very incredulous one, who called the Christian religion, *execrabilis superstitio*, states that it was contained in ancient books of the Jewish priests, that the East should prevail, and that a power should proceed from Judea that should possess universal dominion. These were scattered lights that went out from Judea, their reuniting centre, and gave the heathen an anticipation and a persuasion that some great and illustrious deliverer was about to be born in the world. Jesus came accordingly, we are told, in the fulness of the times,—"the Messenger of the Covenant."

It is also predicted that his advent to his temple would be its greatest glory. He "shall come to his temple." This is a promise, and every promise means that it would be something good; and Christ's coming to his temple must be that which is the greatest good, or the glory of that temple. It is so still. It is Christ in his church that is a church's greatest glory—a church's greatest good. No ceremony, no splendour of ritual, no processional pomp, can be any substitute for an absent Christ; and Christ present in the midst of a people, without companion and without comparison, is the light that lightens the Gentiles, and is the glory of his people Israel. So, Jesus promises that where two or three are met together in his name, there will he be in the midst of them.

But Christ is called, as I have already noticed, "the Messenger of the Covenant." What is this covenant? In the simplest form in which I can define it, it is a dispensation. The Apostle Paul describes that covenant when he says (Hebrews viii. 10, 11): "This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them

in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people: and they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest." This is the covenant that God will establish. It means that Christ should come forth, a Saviour—that through him God's blessings might come upon us; and by him our supplications should rise to God; and that to him we are to seek, in order to obtain the pledged and the promised mercies of the covenant of grace.

But Jesus, the Messenger of the Covenant, is spoken of as regarded by his people in two respects. He is "the Lord whom ye seek;" and he is, in the second place, the Lord "whom ye delight in." He is, first of all, "the Lord whom ye seek." In ancient times, Abraham saw Christ's day from afar, and leaped for joy as he saw it. And throughout the whole of the Jewish dispensation, the Christians, not of the age, but in spite of the corruptions of the age, —the few who thought upon God's name, and feared the Lord,—looked for, and saw the Advent of Christ, as the fulfilment of the promised blessing,—a promise ancient as the Fall,

and given by God himself. If we are Christ's people, we shall constantly seek him. We shall come to the sanctuary seeking Christ. Our heart will find its polarity in him; our souls, their rest and their repose in him; our reason and our conscience will find—the one its satisfaction, and the other its peace, in him. In the sermon, we shall seek not flowers and ornaments, and rhetoric, but Christ. In the sanctuary, we shall look not for beauty of architecture, but for Christ. Our great end in meeting, our great thirst when we meet, our ardent prayer at the Throne of Grace, will be, that we may find Him whom our soul seeks. Christ alone can satisfy our anxious inquiry—How shall man be just with God? Christ alone can show us whither we are going, and where we shall be, and what we shall be, when this world, and things seen and temporal, shall be no more for ever. To seek him is, therefore, to seek the jewel of inestimable value,—the sun that lightens us—the bread that feeds us—the living water that refreshes us. A Christian is one seeking to know more of his Saviour; and the more he knows, by a strange but universal law, the more he seeks to know, of Christ.

It is added, as another feature in every Christian, and especially the feature of the Christians in the days of Malachi,—the few and the far between, as they were,—"They delight in Christ." Almost every Apostle in the New Testament tells us that joy or delight in Christ is a great Christian characteristic: "Whom having not seen, ye love: in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." (1 Peter i. 8.) And the Apostle Paul says, "Rejoice in the Lord always." And two-thirds of the kingdom of heaven is "peace and joy:" "The kingdom of heaven is righteousness, and peace, and joy." The first impression produced by the reception of the Gospel is joy; and the next is temperance, patience, brotherly kindness, charity. The aspect in which we receive the Gospel is "as good news;" and we know the response to good news is not holiness in the first instance, but happiness. When we hear, therefore, that Christ died and suffered, that we might have salvation, and that there is no reason on this side of heaven, or on the other, why we should not be saved, except our own rejection of the remedy, it should instantly be responded to

by joy, and that joy will originate gratitude, and that gratitude will originate love, and love is the fulfilling of the law; for the law is love in practice, and love is the law in principle. Thus joy is the spontaneous response of every Christian heart, when he knows the good news, that there is a Saviour for the chiefest of sinners.

Let me ask, Do we delight in the Lord Jesus Christ? Do we delight in his presence? I know no finer test of Christian character than this: Are we ever in a place or in circumstances, where the idea, the thought, the shadow of Christ, would be an intrusion? If we feel that our position jars with a sense of his presence, there is something in it wrong. It does not need logic, it does not need reasoning; there is an instinct in the human heart surer than logic, and truer than argument, that tells such a one that he is where he should not be, or he is doing something he should not do, when he feels that if Christ were present, he would be in a false position, or he could not bear it. The idea of God is ever a solemn one, but it is not an awful one. I fear, the most ordinary idea of God is, that he is some terrific, awful being. That

has been the teaching of the great Western apostasy, inculcating the idea of God as a terrible being, whose nearness is to be deprecated: whereas, if I understand the New Testament, —and the reader can judge,—its very first idea is, that we should feel the presence of God as a child feels the presence of a mother—a son the approach of a father; and walk with him, not as a crouching slave before a scourging tyrant, but as a loving son in the sunshine of the face of a loving father. That is the very first idea of the Gospel. God is love, and Christ is the channel of that love to us, as well as the exponent how great it is. When we come into the sanctuary, the presence of Christ should there be realised, sensibly felt. It is not fanaticism to say so. When a person feels the light of the sun, it is evident that the sun shines; and when we feel in our heart kindling joy, strengthening conviction, and maturing hopes, prospects, peace,—there is the evidence that Christ is touching our hearts, and that our hearts respond to him. And he himself tells us, "Wheresoever two or three are met together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." This is not a figure of speech: it is a fact; a

Christian can say, "If thy presence go not with me, carry me not up hence." Surely, if we realised this one thought, that Christ's presence is the essence of church and Christianity, there would be fewer quarrels about churches. For instance, all the peers of the realm meeting together do not constitute the court; the queen must be amongst them that they may be a court. All the architects of England, combining their skill, could not build a palace; it is the queen taking up her residence in it that makes it a palace. All the processions of Rome and Greece combined, all the priests and bishops in the world, all rites and ceremonies together, cannot constitute a church; it is only Christ in the midst of two or three: if he be there, there is a church; if he be absent, there may be the splendid trappings of the dead, but there are not the beating hearts of Christians made alive unto God. It is Christ in the midst of his people that makes a church, and in the absence of that nothing else will. Nor will a Christian be satisfied with anything else. Splendid form pleases the eye; but he comes hungry for bread. Beautiful music may charm the ear; but he comes for bread. An eloquent sermon may

captivate the fancy; beautiful figures of rhetoric may tickle the imagination; sound and logical argument may satisfy the reason; but if there be not in the sermon an exhibition of that which is the desire of the deepest depths of our hearts, that sermon is but heresy, or worse. We delight in Christ.

If, then, in the language of this beautiful passage, we delight in Christ, "the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in," I would notice, in a very few divisions, some respects in which we shall do so. First, we shall delight in his day, which is just the reflected light of the Sun of righteousness. If we delight in Christ, we shall delight in his day. To a Christian worn out with the turmoil of the week, in this great mill or factory which we call London, what an escape—what a blessed escape is it to get within four walls, beyond the reach of the counting-house, and the machinery amid which we have constantly to toil, and far from the ceaseless roar of this restless sea of living beings! What a treat to be able to retire from all, and in some sequestered spot—the more sequestered the better—to hear of a better land, of bright

hopes, of a blessed future, and of an open way to heaven! Were our Sabbaths to depart, our sanctuaries would very soon moulder in the rains of heaven. Let us keep the Sabbath by setting an example of calling it a delightsome day; and let us honour it, by showing ourselves in the sanctuary, and regarding its exercises, and its duties, and its privileges as joyful and happy in the experience of our hearts. If we delight in Christ, we shall delight in his day, and we shall endeavour, as we have opportunity and power, to maintain and to preserve in all its integrity that day,—the Sabbath. I know not whether it be created by Christianity, or whether it be the test, or the index of the amount of Christianity, but one or other the the Sabbath certainly is. We may judge of a nation's religion by a nation's Sabbaths. On the continent of Europe there is hardly any religion, and there are no Sabbaths; and in our land there are, with all their defects, precious Sabbaths, and so we have a purer Christianity than any other land. One deeply regrets that in Germany the Lutheran Church holds so low an idea of the Sabbath as it does. I do not mean that our Sabbath should be like the

Jewish one,—a day of rigid ceremonies, of mechanical devotions; on the contrary, it should be a day for the reciprocity of everything that is beneficent and good. But primarily it is the day for casting our reckoning, learning where on this sea of life we are, our latitude, our longitude, whither we are going, and what progress we have made.

If we delight in Christ, we shall, in the next place, delight in his Word. The Bible and the Sabbath are two of our best and greatest privileges. I know nothing so precious in our whole possession as that Book, the Bible. The Sabbath is only second, if indeed it be second, to it: for what is the Bible? It is the voice of God sounding along the ages; it is the pharmacopœia in which are divine prescriptions; it is God's balance. Christ is the Tree of Life, and the texts of this Book, which holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, are the leaves of that Tree. The Bible is a deep and a yet unexhausted ocean, the floor of which is covered with precious pearls; and he who dives the deepest and the oftenest will bring up the richest and rarest. It is that Book which is to the voyager to heaven, to

eternity, what his compass and his chart are to the mariner. Without it we cannot sail surely, without it we cannot die happily. If we delight in the Saviour, that is, if we be Christians at all, this blessed book will be dear to us; we shall study books that illustrate it; wait upon the ministry that explains it. What is the duty of the minister of the Gospel? To solve what seems difficulties in it; to make plain what seems intricate in it. And the ministry that makes us understand the Bible most clearly may not be the most eloquent, but it is the most useful. Here is our great mission; if ministers fail here, they fail in the great end of their appointment on earth. Let us then study this Book. Do not supersede it by the idle and airy romance, or by the newspaper. Not that I would proscribe the newspaper; I think the modern newspaper is one of the most wonderful things in the world; and in this day, when ancient prophecies are fulfilling in every day's history, one finds in the newspaper the most striking proofs of the inspiration, and the most powerful evidences of the fulfilment, of God's Word. But do not read the Bible in the light of the newspaper, but the newspaper in

the light of the Bible; but do not supersede the Bible by the newspaper. You may stoop down to sip from the stream as you pass by one, but the other you must live on, and feed on, and drink of, as a living fountain of living waters which you cannot do without.

If we delight in Christ, we shall delight also in his people; and this is the last feature I will mention, a test as well as a feature. If we love the Saviour, we shall love them that are his. With too many of us it is the tendency to love such a one, because he is a member of the good old church that we belong to, or loves the peculiar dissent that we prefer; or because he likes our prayer-book, or our form of worship. Such is not delighting in Christ, and therefore delighting in Christians; but it is delighting in church or dissent, and therefore delighting in churchmen or dissenters. The characteristic of a Christian is, that, while he has his preference in things ecclesiastical, which he may justly have, his principle of delight in Christ makes him delight in a Christian in spite of his presbytery, his episcopacy, or his dissent. He can penetrate the exterior ecclesiastical wrappage, and see beneath it the heart of a Christian, the

person of a follower of the Lamb. And if we delight in Christ, we shall love all Christ's people. In spite of what we think not most beautiful in our estimate, but because they are Christ's, we shall love them, preferring his superscription and image upon them to any other stamp or impress that man can strike.

Blessed be God that the Messenger of the Covenant is come! Blessed be God that some of us can say, Though we do not love him as we ought, we would love and delight in him more! Blessed be God that, though we do not seek him with that intensity with which we should, we can say, that we can travel far, and face many a storm, in order to hear his Word preached; and that we can sacrifice not a little in order that we may love that Word more; and that we have a firm faith that Christ is ours, and no mean hope that neither life nor death shall separate us from the love of God which is in Jesus Christ our Lord.

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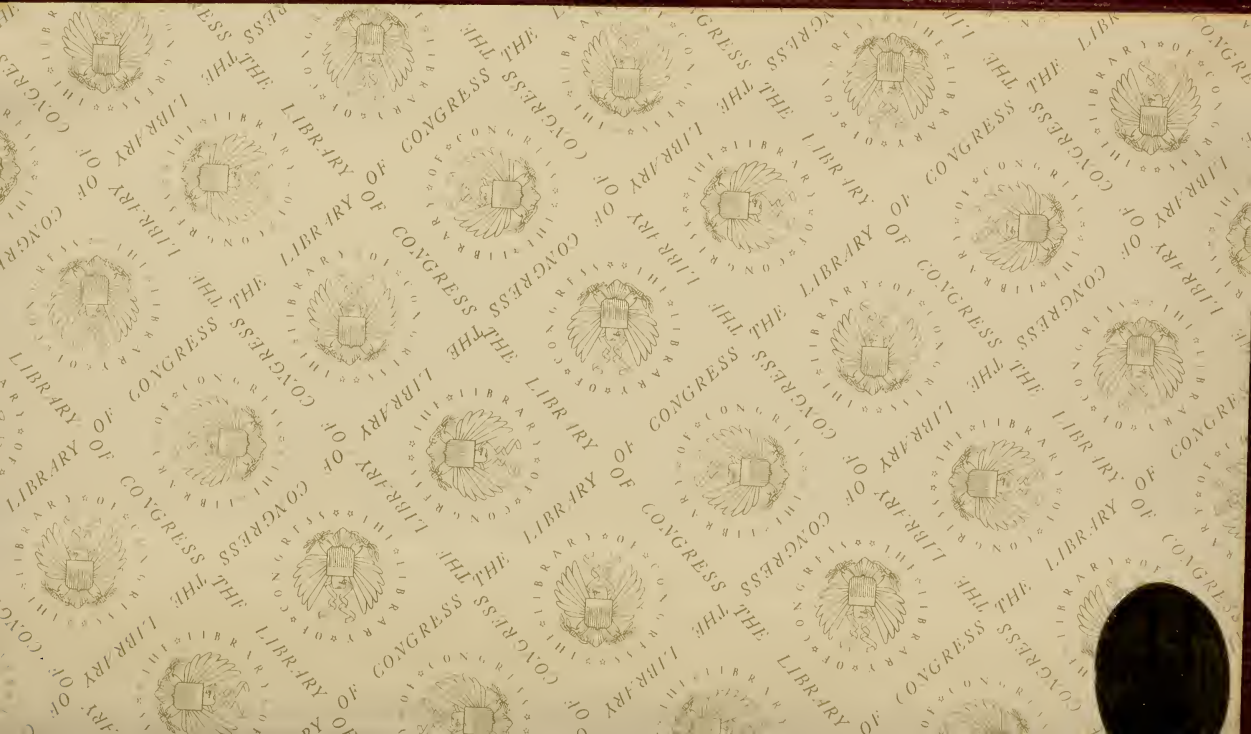
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